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# GNOSTICISM AND RELIGION.

GEORGE J. LUCAS.

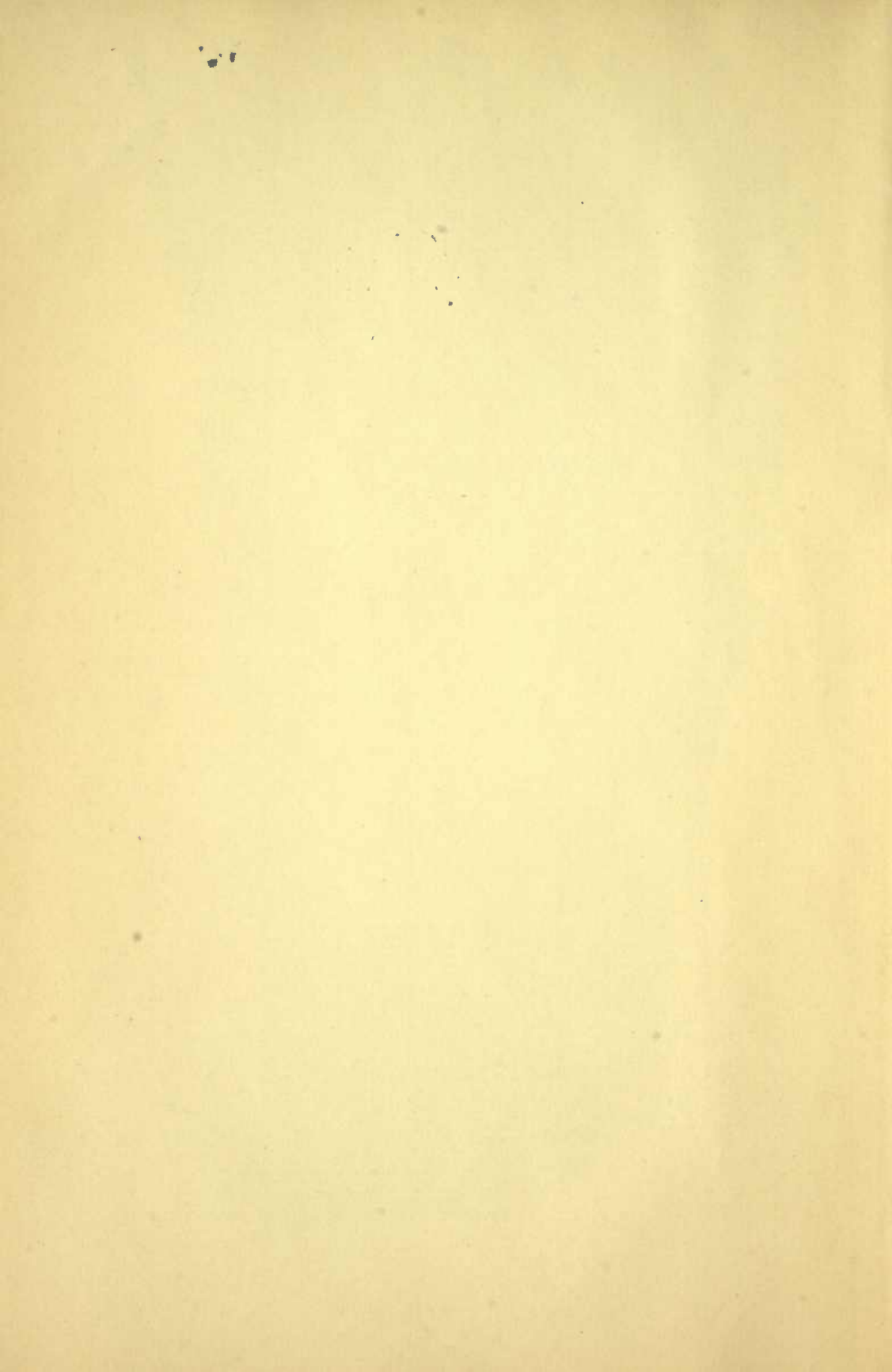








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# AGNOSTICISM AND RELIGION

PRECEDED BY

A HISTORY OF AGNOSTICISM



DEUS LUX MEA.

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# AGNOSTICISM AND RELIGION

BEING AN EXAMINATION OF

SPENCER'S RELIGION OF THE UNKNOWABLE

PRECEDED BY

A HISTORY OF AGNOSTICISM

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DISSERTATION

FOR THE DOCTORATE IN THEOLOGY

AT THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

BY

REV. GEORGE J. LUCAS

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*'You adore that which you know not;  
we adore that which we know.'*—*John iv, 22.*

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## INTRODUCTION.

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Physical Science has come in like a giant to revolutionize the present race of men. The changes its wonderful discoveries have effected, have come like a new apocalypse of Nature. This no one will feel inclined to call in question. On the bearing of the new discoveries on Religion, however, we have not the same unanimous voice. The great majority of the scientific names believe that Religion is not impaired but ennobled by the Evolutionary Hypothesis. They believe that the Law of Evolution is not only not incompatible with an Infinite Mind, but that the concept of the Deity working by Evolution, is far more exalted than the theory of Special Creations, and that Religion is thereby elevated in the same proportion and degree. There are some scientists, however, who maintain that the proof of Evolution is the disproof of God. They regard Religion as the enemy of Science, and proclaim that Science has been, all along the way, impeded on her onward march by Religion, and that now that she has triumphed, as they say, she has given to Religion her death-blow. This form of scientific faith has been preached and is being preached, on either continent, on platforms and in multitudinous essays, pamphlets and books, by brilliant but not always profound representatives of the anti-theistic camp. As a result, this anti-theistic spirit is in the air, it has spread among the masses, a George Eliot writes it, a Swinburne, a Leconte de Lisle sings it. This new *Time-Spirit* ("Zeit-Geist") has grown so strong in England, that an eminent writer tells us that at the universities, it is the predominant creed among the undergraduates and the younger dons, and that it is sometimes heard in drawing-rooms from women's lips. And in this country, all statistics agree, that an alarming percentage of our people are non-Church goers.

This revolutionary spirit has been swelled to its, I may say, oceanic vastness by two main causes. The first is the uprising

against the realistic philosophy, inaugurated by Descartes, and continued by such eminent thinkers as Berkeley, Kant and Hume, during this trinity of centuries down to the present day. This philosophy drank in the spirit of the ancient forms of materialism, skepticism and idealism or phenomenism, and the anti-theists of the present day are intoxicated with it.

The second chief source of the revolt grew out of the peculiar fact, that the hostile scientists confuse diverse *religious opinions* with *Religion* itself, and thus misstate and misrepresent Religion. And because the new discoveries, as they interpreted them, seemed to be at enmity with one or another of the religious interpretations, they at once hastened to the conclusion, that Science had annihilated the Bible-Religion and all vestiges of belief in the Infinite Mind. Perhaps the most gigantic of the misrepresentations to which we have reference, is the statement—which the reader of the smallest magazine knows by heart—that evolution has demonstrated the foolishness of the creational account in the first chapter of *Genesis*, and has rendered utterly superfluous the demand for any Designing Mind behind the Universe of things. A superficial study of Church History might have informed those learned men, that the Theory of Evolution first emanated from the brain of the greatest Doctor of the early Church, and that it was actually propounded by him as the true and only exegesis of the first chapter of *Genesis*. And if the Evolutional hypothesis is such an evident destruction of an Intelligent Creator, is it not strange that the critical genius of Kant has not mentioned it among his famous disproofs of the existence of God? is not strange that the *theistic* that the *Christian* intellects of Laplace and Sir John Herschel, were able to perceive in it a nobler and sublimer expression of the wisdom of the Mighty Artificer? Yet these three are the modern creators of the Law of Evolution.

The regress to the Greek Materialism, Sensism, Phenomenism, having thus joined hands with the most vitiated confounding of *Religion* with *its free interpretations*, has easily shaped itself into, what we may nominate, the Modern Philosophic Anti-theistic Science. The pivotal principles of this Science are three, Denial of God, Identification of the mind and soul of man and of all things with Matter, and the consequent extension of the hypothesis of Evolution, not alone to the physical universe, but to all forms of

life, mental life included, "mind is only a transitory appearance in the eternal evolutions of Matter." And this Science is paraded and preached, and has taken a deep hold among the masses as among the cultured; it calls itself *Science*, as if it were the only Science, and introduces itself on all occasions, as if it and the Science which all admit, were identical; and it especially introduces itself, as the liberator, which has disenthralled the living century from religious slavery and all belief in a Personal God.

The fruits of this Science, now that *verstorben ist der Herrgott oben*, now that the Great Companion is dead, as the wail has gone forth, are, to put it calmly, the extinction of *all future hope*, the extinction of all *true morality*, of that *righteousness* which Matthew Arnold found a solace in, as the "*Three-fourths of life*;" the extinction of *the nobility of man's intellect*, for is it not matter and shall he not perish like the beasts of the field? This is no exaggeration, on such a theme exaggerative language is impossible, and the followers of the new Science have felt the awfulness of the misery. The late Prof. Clifford, describing the "utter loneliness" he felt at the loss of God, says:—

"We have seen the spring sun shine out of an empty heaven upon a soulless earth."

And 'Physicus' in concluding his *Candid Examination of Theism*, sobs:—

"I cannot but feel that for me, and for others who think as I do, the precept 'Know thyself' has been transformed into the terrific oracle of Ædipus, 'Mayest thou never know the truth of what thou art.'"

Now before this tremendous problem how must we stand? Thirty years ago Cardinal Newman said, "Let us discuss the prospects of Christianity itself, instead of the differences between Anglican and Catholic." To-day he would have said, let us discuss the prospects of Religion itself, instead of the differences between Catholic and Protestant. The great Cardinal's day has passed, but Cardinal Gibbons says it in his place, and to the American people. In the *Introduction to Our Christian Heritage* the Cardinal seeks an alliance with the Protestant Churches, in defence of the common citadel, in the following language:—

"Far from despising or rejecting their support, I would gladly hold out to them the right hand of fellowship, so long as they unite with us in striking the common foe."



And the same writer addresses this same invitation to our Protestant brothers again, but this time as the messenger of the most authoritative teacher living, the greatest religious intellect of this century, Leo the thirteenth.<sup>1</sup> And indeed the spirit of this unity against anti-Theism—for with us *Christian Unity* means *theistic* unity, as *anti-Christian* unity means *anti-theistic* unity—is reciprocated by the most eminent voices representative of the Protestant creeds. The late Bishop Brooks said:—

“The world is trembling on the brink of atheism, while men are frittering away their lives in championing the shibboleths of their creeds.”

In surveying the field of Scientific Anti-Religionism, we discern that it concentrates, embodies itself in Agnosticism, and Messrs. Huxley, Tyndall and Spencer are its apostles. These three men, more than any men living, have established and evangelized the new Science; their writings and it are synonymous, and anything outside of their writings is not worth considering, agnostically; their utterances are the new gospel, the agnostic-science-revelation. Of these three Mr. Spencer is the acknowledged coryphæus. Professors Huxley and Tyndall’s works are collections of scattered essays and lectures, which evince no philosophic unity; in addition, neither one admits any Religion as a substitution for *exploded* Theism. Mr. Spencer, on the contrary, propounds a *substitutive* Religion, and he proposes the philosophical and scientific claims for his religious view, side by side, with the philosophical and scientific claims for antagonistic Theism, not in a disconnected form but in one closely packed volume. Mr. Spencer is *the* agnostic leader; Prof. Tyndall in *The Belfast Address*, in rapturous admiration, styles him “the Apostle of the Understanding;” and four years ago, when he was entertained at a banquet in New York, at which there were present presidents of colleges, scientists and other savants, in the toast of the evening, Mr. Spencer was addressed in these words:—

“We recognize in your knowledge greater comprehensiveness than in any other living man, or than has been presented by any one in our generation.”

Mr. Spencer is the personification of Religious Agnosticism; the first part of the first volume of his *Synthetic Philosophy*, entitled

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Unity, Introduction to the Pope’s Encyclical, on Christian Unity, in Scranton Truth*, Oct. 25, 1894.

*The Unknowable*, is the completed and systematic expression of that personification to which we have referred. For this reason, in consonance with the spirit of *Christian Unity* spoken of above, we have chosen this Work as the subject of this 'Dissertation.' In *The Unknowable*, Mr. Spencer attaches only a secondary importance to the claims of the Bible-Religion as such, what he strives to impress, is the argument that Agnostic Science and Agnostic Metaphysics have rendered impossible and obsolete, the *very conception* of any Personal Deity. It is not Christianity that Mr. Spencer demolishes, it is *Theism*, it is not *Revealed Religion* that he consigns to the effete and dead past, it is *all Religion*, i. e., all belief in a Personal God. This makes the issue in the present struggle, primarily and directly turn, not on the reasonableness of the divine foundations of the faith, which God has revealed to us through His Eternal Son, and which we all believe, but on the underlying foundations of those very foundations, viz., on the fundamental concepts of Natural Religion, of Religion as it discloses itself to the naked eye of reason. The criticism of *The Unknowable* therefore, which we are about to enter on, will in its main outlines be simply this, a plain and sincere investigation of the demands of the Agnostic Metaphysic and Agnostic Science and Religion, for religious sovereignty. It will be simply this, has Religious and Scientific Agnosticism brought valid reasons, for the repudiation of the Living God, and the substitution of the Unknowable Non-Living God in his stead? or on the contrary, is Agnosticism but a passing storm, a blast and blare of trumpets, summoning an army of mere spectral fancies, against the philosophic and truly scientific phalanxes of good solid facts and good solid arguments, which surround the inexpugnable fortress of the concept of a Personal God, and of its correlate a *Theistic Religion*? This latter we maintain and will endeavor to make good in our criticism of Mr. Spencer.

The agnostic metaphysics form the principal ingredient in the demonstration of *The Unknowable*. A clear conception of what one's adversaries mean, is always a help and very often an argument; and when the reader approaches a controversy fully enlightened, concerning the exact ground and the exact strength, on which the discussion rests, it is superfluous to say it will be an advantage to him. In the present case, this advantage is augmented a hundred



fold, by the true understanding of what the agnostic philosophy is, for it is not what the generality take it to be. For these reasons, we have preceded the analysis of *The Unknowable*, by an historical sketch of the agnostic metaphysic, tracing it from the teachings of the Greek philosophy of Doubt down to Mr. Spencer, for the whole substance and color of his thought is saturated with it. This, to our mind, presents a complete view of the existent religious form of Agnosticism, and leaves nothing to be desiderated to the full and rounded examination of *The Unknowable* and the theistic reply to it.

In selecting the present theme, as we just explained it, as the subject-matter of our "Dissertation" for the degree of Doctor in Dogmatic Theology at the Catholic University of America, it is unnecessary to add that the selection has been made, under the approval of the University Faculty; and it is proper to state, that although as the Very Reverend Dean has informed us, the three learned Professors to whom was committed the examination of this Dissertation, have each given it the sanction of their approbation, yet they are by no means to be held responsible for all the opinions expressed in it. To the author attaches this responsibility.

In conclusion we hope that this attempt may bring some light, if but to a few, who are led astray by the illusive light of the Pseudo Science and the Pseudo Religion, and that it may make them see that the Religion of the Living God is built on such a rock of truth, that no present, or possible future revelation of Science can storm it, that all present and possible future discovery must harmonize with it. For the harmonization of Science and Religion is simply the blending of different colors of the one white truth.

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PART I.

THE RISE OF AGNOSTICISM

FROM

XENOPHANES TO SPENCER.

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CHAPTER I.

ANCIENT AGNOSTIC DOCTRINES.

§ 1.—*Agnosticism: its Definition.*

The word *Agnostic* is derived from the Greek, and literally means one who does not know. The kindred term in classical Greek is *Agnostos*, it signifies 'unknown,' 'not knowing,' 'ignorant of.' The vocabulum *Agnostic*, or *Agnosticos*, which would be the Greek form, is not found in the Greek. *Agnostic* is made up of 'a' privative and 'gnostic.' Consequently, an *Agnostic* is he to whom the quality of being a *Gnostic* is denied. Let us see what a *Gnostic* is. This word is rarely met with in classical authors, and it signifies one endowed with the faculty of knowledge or 'gnosis.'

Gnosis with the Greeks designated knowledge, but was generally applied to knowledge of the highest rank. Pythagoras styles Transcendental Philosophy, or the Science of Being in the abstract, *Gnosis ton onton*.<sup>1</sup> Plato applies the word to certain and stable cognition as opposed to opinion. The latter, he says, is unfixed and unstable and appertains to things mutable and fleeting, while the former belongs to things immutable and eternal, and is a lofty apprehension of those truths which surpass the senses, and are

<sup>1</sup> Diogenes Laertes, *Pythagoras*, lib. viii, quoted by F. Giraud, *Ophitæ, Dissertatio Inauguralis* (ad Magisterii lauream in collegio theologico Insulensi comparandam), p. 5, Insulis in Gallia, 1884.

contemplated by the intelligence alone.<sup>1</sup> In the New Testament, the word recurs and signifies: 'heretical knowledge,' 'divine faith,' 'theological knowledge' or 'divine science founded on faith.'<sup>2</sup> In harmony with these Scriptural uses, Clement of Alexandria defines Gnosis as "the firm and fixed demonstration of those verities which are built upon the faith of the Lord, which cannot disappear or perish, and as such are truly worthy the name of science."<sup>3</sup>

This true gnosis a powerful heretical body of the early Church, beginning, some historians affirm, in the time of Simon Magus, wished to make their own. Jumbling up into a heap, the Platonic and Pythagorean *placita* and the teachings of faith, they created a new and divine philosophy. The simplicity of the common class of mortals could not enter the charmed esoteric circles of this sublime gnosis. Thus, in contradistinction to those who accepted pure and unadulterated the doctrines of the Redeemer, they styled themselves *Gnostics*. Their pretentiousness reached such a height that we find them evolving from the divine essence, such distinct and independent entities as Reason, Intellect, Wisdom, Power and Peace. These primary emanations they conceived produced others less ethereal, which in their turn, begot other less subtle emanations. Entirely there were three hundred and sixty five emanations, each of a less rare essence, each in its own realm or sphere, in which it reigned, supreme. The lowest, that is the three hundred and sixty-fifth sphere, bordered on matter. Its chief archon or lord reduced the original chaos of matter, and so became the creator of what we call the world.<sup>4</sup> This is the system of the Basilidians. As in the Hindu philosophy, it conceives creation pure and resplendent at its first issue but becoming less ethereal and bright at the extremities.

The Agnostics, at least in name, profess themselves the very opposite of the Gnostics of old. They modestly declare they know nothing, and that nothing can be known. Let us hear Prof. Huxley, who states that he is the creator of the term. He tells us that when he was a member of the Metaphysical Society, most of

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, Book v, ch. xxii, p. 167, in *Plato's Works*, vol. ii (Bohn's trans.), London, New York, 1894.

<sup>2</sup> *I Cor.*, ch. viii, v. 1; *I Tim.*, ch. vi, v. 20; *Luke*, ch. i, v. 77; *Rom.*, ch. ii, v. 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Strom.*, ch. vii, 10. Cf. ch. vi, 1, i. 20; ii. 11, quoted by Giraud, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> A. W. Momerie, *Agnosticism*, pp. 4, 5, 3 ed., London, 1889.

his colleagues were *Ists* of one sort or another; to give his own opinions a name he called himself an *agnostic* :—

“I took thought,” he affirms, “and invented what I conceived to be the appropriate title of ‘Agnostic.’ It came into my head as suggestively antithetic to the ‘gnostic’ of Church History who professed to know so much about the very things of which he was ignorant.”<sup>1</sup>

He writes in the same article :—

“I further say that Agnosticism is not properly described as a ‘negative’ creed, nor indeed as a creed of any kind, except in so far as it expresses absolute faith in the validity of a principle which is as much ethical as intellectual. This principle may be stated in various ways, but they all amount to this: that it is wrong for a man to say that he is certain of the objective truth of any proposition unless he can produce evidence which logically justifies that certainty. This is what Agnosticism asserts; and in my opinion, it is all that is essential to Agnosticism.”

With all respect for the inventor of this important word, this definition would make mathematics Agnosticism, yes and physics and biology and every other science under the sun. It would make even theology—which the professor so heartily hates—Agnosticism, and this too out of Prof. Huxley’s own mouth. “The scientific theologian,” he states in the same essay, “admits the Agnostic principle, however widely his results may differ from those reached by the majority of Agnostics.” The mathematician, the physicist, the biologist, the theologian all affirm equally with Prof. Huxley that “it is wrong for a man to say that he is certain of the objective truth of any proposition unless he can produce evidence which logically justifies that certainty.” But no one will say that mathematics, or physics or biology or theology are Agnosticism, as I remarked above. Hence we must turn from Prof. Huxley’s all-embracing definition and seek a more distinctive description. We fear too—Prof. Huxley’s asseveration to the contrary notwithstanding—that we shall find Agnosticism a very ‘negative creed.’

Not to speak of Mr. Harrison’s terse definition, when he puts himself the query :—“Why then do we object to being called Agnostics? Simply because Agnostic is dog-Greek for ‘Don’t know.’”<sup>2</sup>—Webster has the following definition :—

<sup>1</sup> *Agnosticism and Christianity, Nineteenth Century*, June, 1889.

<sup>2</sup> *The Ghost of Religion, Nineteenth Century*, March, 1884.



"Agnosticism is that doctrine which professing ignorance, neither asserts nor denies; specifically in theology, the doctrine that the existence of a personal deity can be neither asserted nor denied, neither proved nor disproved, because of the necessary limits of the human mind (as sometimes charged upon *Hamilton* and *Mansel*) or because of the insufficiency of the evidence furnished by psychical and physical data to warrant a positive conclusion (as taught by Herbert Spencer) opposed alike to dogmatic skepticism and to dogmatic theism."<sup>1</sup>

Another lucid definition, from a more philosophic and most authoritative source, is this:—

"Agnosticism is a theory of the Unknowable which assumes its most definite form in the denial of the possibility of any knowledge of God. 1st kind: connected with theory that we know only the phenomenal and a logical deduction from it. 2d kind: held by those who do not hold the phenomenal theory of knowledge but rest their deduction that the Infinite and the Absolute are unknowable on the limitation of human intelligence, maintaining that the infinite transcends the limits of our knowledge, and must on that account remain unknown, while the existence of the infinite God must be a matter of belief."<sup>2</sup>

We may add a third and last explanation of the limitation and nescience of the human mind, and of the object of this limitation and nescience, which shall put the matter in a still clearer light, if it is possible:—

"The Agnostic professes," writes Very Rev. Dr. Hewitt, "ignorance of those deeper causes, namely of First and Final Causes, of the origin and the end of the universe, particularly of the world and of the beings contained in what is called in a wide and general sense nature. . . . The ignorance must be universal and necessary, arising from the nature of that which is unknown and from the nature of the human mind. The Agnostic professes that he cannot know, that no man can know that in respect of which he is an Agnostic. That is to say there is an *unknowable* in respect to which the profession of knowledge is a mere pretence."<sup>3</sup>

## § 2.—*Hindu Sensationalism.*

The first and fundamental failing of the human reason, is to relinquish the noblest, the most useful and the most essential of all truths, the existence of the divine Being. This error—which is akin to intellectual suicide—seems to be as old as antiquity itself,

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary*, unab. *supp.*, new edit., 1888, Springfield, Mass.

<sup>2</sup> Schaff-Herzog, *Encycl. of Religious Knowledge*, p. 36, word *Agnosticism* (author Henry Calderwood), v. I., 3 ed., 1891, Toronto, New York, London.

<sup>3</sup> *Amer. Cath. Quart. Rev.*, Jan., 1891, v. 16; *The Christian Agnostic and the Christian Gnostic*. Conf. Max Müller, *Why I am not an Agnostic*, *Nineteenth Century*, p. 890, Dec., 1894.



and it is certainly as new as current Agnosticism. When a school of philosophers bid adieu to the principle of God's existence, they promise fair to leave all else that is noble in truth beside. The history of philosophy points to no non-theistic school, which has not torn piece-meal all that is exalted in man, the grandeur of his higher nature, his superiority over matter, the essential difference between him and the lower forms of life, and the imperishableness of the higher part of him, when the lower and material part of his existence has begun to perish. Divorce from the verity that we know God to exist, is divorce from all its cognate and companion truths, divorce from all the fountain principles of true philosophy morality and religion. It is well for us to bear this in mind in sketching the growth of the Agnostic philosophy.

These remarks are verified in the philosophy of the Orient. The moment it became divorced from the Vedas or Sacred Books, it became sensationalism. *Sankhya* they called it; its founder was Kapila, whom we may style a Hindu Condillac. With Kapila all thought is but higher sensation, all sensation but a nobler form of matter.<sup>1</sup> These two principles are identical with modern Agnosticism. Kapila, no doubt, would have made a positive statement, and given us a theory telling us *what* sensation is, *what* matter is; the Agnostic, on the other hand, will limit himself to the affirmation that sensation is evolved from matter, but not to ask him what sensation or matter is, they are and must for ever be *unknown*. So far then as the selfsameness of intelligence, sensation, matter is concerned, the Agnostic has made no advance on the ancient Hindu.

### § 3.—*Incipient Greek Agnosticism: Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Anaxagoras.*

The first Greek philosophers, beginning with the Physicists under Thales, the Mathematicians under Anaximander and Pythagoras, and the Eleatics under Xenophanes and Zeno, confined themselves to speculations on the nature of the Universe.<sup>2</sup> The last of these schools, however, gave a part of their attention to the study of the deceptiveness of the faculties of knowledge, and in this way incho-

<sup>1</sup> Cousin, *History of Modern Philosophy*, vol i., pp. 375-380 (transl. by O. W. Wight), New York, 1889.

<sup>2</sup> Lewes, *History of Philosophy*, v. 1, pp. 1-63, Library edit., New York, 1866.

ated the Skeptical Philosophy.<sup>1</sup> This inchoation was as rude as Xenophanes its originator—whom Aristotle dubs as “a little too uncivilized”<sup>2</sup>—it did not tell us whether cognition was universally fallacious, or only at times and *per accidens*. For this reason we find Mr. Lewes, in the able work we have quoted, characterize the views of Xenophanes as “no systematic skepticism.”<sup>3</sup>

Heraclitus appears to have been the first systematic doubter in Greek philosophy. The coarse doubts of Xenophanes and his school, of a certainty, stimulated Heraclitus to a study of the nature of certitude in itself. He beheld and was awfully impressed with the more than instantaneous, the more than protean mutability of things. “All is,” he said, “and is not; for though in truth it does come into being, yet it forthwith ceases to be.”<sup>4</sup> In this sense, Aristotle says of him, that “affirming all things to be and not to be, he appeared to make all things true.”<sup>5</sup> This doctrine Hegel declares to be an anticipation of his celebrated dogma “*Being and Nothing is the same*.” The following is the reason he alleges:—

“When Heraclitus says ‘All is flowing (πάντα ῥεῖ)’ he enunciates Becoming as the fundamental feature of all existence. . . . He then goes on to say: Being no more is than not-Being (οὐδὲν μᾶλλον τὸ ὄν τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἐστὶ): a statement expressing the negativity of abstract Being, and its identity with non-Being, as made explicit in Becoming.”<sup>6</sup>

The theory of Heraclitus founded on this doctrine of Becoming, viz., that all things are and are not, not only made “all things true,” but also made all things false. For, by the fact that all things *are*, they are true: obversely, by the fact that all things *are not*, they are false. No wonder, then, that Aristotle in summing up the affirmations of the diverse sects of Skeptics, finds the theory of Heraclitus to take them all in: He says:—

“For almost all these assertions” (that is of the different classes of Skeptical philosophers) “are the same with those of Heraclitus; for this philosopher in affirming that all things are true and all things false, affirms also separately each of these theories.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> *Metaphy.*, Book i, ch. v, p. 25 (Bohn's trans.), London, 1891.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> Lewes, p. 68, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> *Metaphy.*, p. 108, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> *The Logic of Hegel* (trans. by Wallace), p. 168, 2 ed., Oxford, 1892.

<sup>7</sup> *Metaph.*, p. 109, *op. cit.*—The Italics are mine.

The changeableness, the ever-Becoming of all things constituted the philosophic basis of the tenets of the Heraclitics. Heraclitus' theory of Fire, as the first principle—the ἀρχή—of the universe, did not inflow into their theory of doubt. It was different with Anaxagoras. He too emphasized the theory of Becoming, but with him all Becoming is Becoming *mixed*, because there was and is no *one* first principle, and all things are made by the mixtures or fusions of an infinite multitude of primordial elements.

Neither the Fire of Heraclitus, nor the Air of Anaximenes, nor the Water conceived by the first Greek physicist Thales, nor any other one first material principle, but an infinite diversity of such principles, which he names the "Homœomeries" mixed in different proportions, make up the material world.<sup>1</sup> This principle posited, he arrives at conclusions consimilar to those educed by Heraclitus from the ceaseless "flux and reflux" of the elements of the world. We will cite the words of Aristotle who states that his theory was:—

"That there is a certain medium between contradiction; so that all things are false, for when they are mingled, neither is the mixture good nor not good: wherefore there is nothing that one can affirm as true."<sup>2</sup>

This skepticism of Anaxagoras therefore is based on his "homœomerian" mixings, and clearly betrays a confusion of ideas. It is possible that the mixtures be good when viewed under one aspect, and not good when viewed under another. Just as a man may be wise and not wise: he may be wise in one department and not wise in another. It does not therefore follow that because the mixtures are good and not good, under different respects or aspects, that there results a contradiction, and that we must affirm both statements as false. Unless Anaxagoras wished to assert, that the mixtures were at the same time absolutely and in every respect good, and absolutely and in every respect bad, and this assuredly he did not wish to do. Aristotle explains this doctrine, which I have just stated, in the *Metaphysics*, Book iii, chapter iv, and it frequently enters into the later scholastic philosophy.

Anaxagoras was the first among the Greeks to advocate a Supreme Intelligence as the primal Cause. This intelligence com-

<sup>1</sup> Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, lib. i, 839. Conf. Aristotle, *Metaph.*, pp. 16, 34, 93, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Metaph.*, p. 108. Conf. p. 93, *op. cit.*



bines the homœomeries, hence results the beautiful harmonies of the worlds. This doctrine emerges like a flood of light, from the darkness of the theories of Fate and Chance of the pre-Socratic period, and places its author among the first chiefs of philosophic thinkers of all times. Mr. George Lewes, who is a positivist, and who will not be accused of excess of sympathy, remarks on this noble invention :—

“A grand conception: one seldom rivalled in ancient speculation; one so far in advance of the epoch as to be a puzzle to all critics.”<sup>1</sup>

#### § 4.—*Democritus.*

Democritus lived in the fifth century before the Christian era. His philosophy as well as his birth is controverted. Hegel and Zeller view him as the predecessor of Anaxagoras, Lewes as his successor. Some view him as a follower of the Ionian school; but they say he denied all sensible qualities to the elements of things: some consider him an Eleatic, but he admitted a multiplicity of prime principles: Aristotle regards him as identical in doctrine with Anaxagoras in the primal mixtures,<sup>2</sup> but Lucretius, in his philosophic poem *De Natura Rerum*, sets him as the originator of the Atomic theory. The combinations of the atoms are, in a true sense, first mixtures, this will reconcile the last two statements, and will besides establish a logical connection between both systems. However, the Stagyrite informs us that Democritus and his companion Leucippus made *figure, order and position* the causes of the differences of entities to the neglect of inquiry into the nature of *motion* and “how it exists in entities.”<sup>3</sup> No one will be inclined to deny, that the authority of the author of the *Metaphysics*, is of higher historical value than that of the Roman poet in the present question, so that it would seem that the Atomic Theory, as Lucretius expounds it, did not reach such high perfection in its founder Democritus, as that author asserts it did, but rather was the development of a later period. However this may be, there is a logical link between the homœomerianism of Anaxagoras and the atoms of Democritus. The homœomeries are

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.*, Book iii, ch. v, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Book i, ch. iv, p. 21.

founded on the principle that only "like can act upon like." Hence we find Lucretius expounding Anaxagoras as saying :—

"Gold is made of elementary gold. The same for fire and earth and all things else."<sup>1</sup>

If only "like can act upon like," it would seem, considering the infinitely diverse interactions of things, that all things should be alike in one primeval substance, and that the only difference would be that of phenomena or of manifestation. This is the theory of Democritus as Aristotle puts it. Speaking of Democritus and his fellows he says :—

"They affirm that entity differs merely in rhythm, and diathege, and trope; out of these, the rhythm is figure and the diathege order and the trope position."<sup>2</sup>

In this sense Lewes says "Atomism is homœomerianism stripped of qualities."<sup>3</sup>

The theory of knowledge of Democritus bears a logical relation to the tenets of Anaxagoras. When this philosopher advanced that all things were false, his convictions were intensified, as we have seen, by the dogma of Becoming of Heraclitus, so that with him it assumed the form of a Becoming-mixed. Seeing all things in motion, he considered nothing as capable of being verified, because immediately it ceased to be. This plunged him into the study of sensibles merely, to the disregard of the immutable and the permanent. The consequence was that while he taught that all things were false, he believed that the ever-fleeting phenomena of sense must needs be true.<sup>4</sup> Hence his apothegm in the language of the Stagyrte :—

"Entities are such to men as they may have supposed them."<sup>5</sup>

In the same sense we find Democritus saying that "nothing is true," as Aristotle tells us; but, a little lower down on the same page, he states that Democritus held that "the apparent according to sense is necessarily true." And expounding this doctrine in the same passage, he affirms that Anaxogoras and Empedocles and Democritus maintained this opinion, because they confused sense

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, i, 839.

<sup>4</sup> *op. cit.*, Book iii, ch. iv, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.*, Book i, ch. iv, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> *op. cit.*, v. i, p. 99.

and prudence or mind, and because they regarded sense as a mere alteration of the percipient subject.<sup>1</sup>

It would seem that the same men could not have held such clearly contradictory opinions. Their exaltation of sensible knowledge however offers a ready explanation. Things appear differently to the senses at different times, wherefore they concluded according to Aristotle that:—

“Nothing the more is this true than that.”<sup>2</sup>

That is things in themselves are indifferent to truth or falsehood, whether they are false or true, is to us, wrapped in nescience, but inasmuch as they affect the senses, or are mere alterations of the sense faculties, they of necessity must be true.<sup>3</sup> This, in an uncouth form, is the Agnosticism of to-day.

If it be true that he denied an Infinite Mind similar to the Anaxagorean Personal Prime Principle, as Lucretius and modern agnostics affirm,<sup>4</sup> then must Democritus be reputed among the Greeks as the parent and founder of existing Agnosticism.

### § 5.—*Protagoras.*

The sensational doctrines we have expounded easily paved the way for the Sophists. We do not here consider the Sophists as vain paraders of learning, lovers of shallow, litigious logic, but under the aspect of a philosophical sect. The chiefs were Protagoras the Abderite, a disciple of Democritus, Hippias the Eleatic, and the Leontine Gorgias. Let Protagoras speak for the rest:—

“Man is the measure of all things,”

i. e:—

“Man is the criterion of that which exists; all that is perceived by him exists, that which is perceived by no man does not exist.”<sup>5</sup>

This teaching is the expression of the identification of Thought and Sensation, for according to Sextus Empiricus in the passage

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> Tyndall, *The Belfast Address*, in *Fragments of Science*, p. 475. 6 ed., New York, 1889.

<sup>5</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Hypot. Pyrrhon*, p. 44; quoted by Lewes, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

from which we have cited, it means that sense perceptions are the sole criteria of truth. It also signifies, in the explanation of the same authority, that nought exists but *phenomena* or sense manifestations because they alone are perceived by man. The identity of this philosophy with that of Anaxagoras and Democritus is evident, it is its finished scientific expression. It is the doctrine which is termed in modern Agnostic language, *The Relativity of All Knowledge*, which is another name for Agnosticism. So much is this the case, that the axioms, *man is the measure of all things,—whatever is perceived by him exists*, etc., are enunciated *verbatim* now by Mr. Mansel and Mr. Spencer.

We wish to emphasize this observation. An opinion prevails—and it has been seemingly promoted by Agnostic writers—that Agnosticism is a product proper of this age, the latest development of human progress. Assuredly, the evolution hypothesis and the Darwinian doctrine are not distinctively Agnostic positions, and militate neither for nor against the possibility of the cognition of the divine existence. It is true the Agnostic philosophers turn these theories, as well as all the discoveries of physical science, to use to establish their positions, but still it remains true, even in the writings of the same, that the revelations of the science of to-day is not the substance of Agnosticism. This substance twenty-two past centuries have seen and have witnessed.

#### § 6.—Aristotle, the Father of Modern Realism.

The splendid intellects of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle assailed the Sophists and vanquished them. If we except the several schools of Greek Skepticism, no other sect flourished among the ancients bearing an affinity to Agnosticism. Aristotle held undivided sway, *On ne partage point le pouvoir supreme*.

A few remarks on this great thinker, *the philosopher*, will not be inopportune. First, as to his physics. Aristotle was a physicist only *per accidens*, he was first and last a *metaphysician*. I think every person will admit that there never has been a man, and most probably, never shall be, however supereminent he may be in intellect, who can dispense with the experimental science of his time, and wing his mental flight into the higher planes of revolutionized progress of the ages yet unborn, and see things in those



ages, which his contemporaries cannot even dream of. The great scientific geniuses have, as a rule, made but one notable discovery ; this was effected at times by chance, often, after long and weary years of search, most often, because the age had grown up to and was ripe for the new point of progress. The reason is simple, the Physical Sciences depend on experiment and observation. If these are not at hand, intellect has no lamp to guide it, inquiry no path to follow. Aristotle's physics were not his defects but the imperfections of that age. It was not an era of great natural discoveries.

The Metaphysics of Aristotle reigned supreme up to the time of Lord Bacon, and they are now followed in reality, if not always in name, by all Realists of all schools. Of course, the ever-increasing data furnished by the progress of the Natural Sciences, make Metaphysics a progressive science, but the eternal principles which underlie Metaphysics do not change, and these principles, all will allow, have come to us from Aristotle.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Note.*—It is interesting to compare different opinions on the merits of Aristotle. Lewes the historian writes:—

"Aristotle seems to have been the greatest intellect of antiquity, an intellect at once comprehensive and subtle, patient, receptive and original. . . . While therefore the majority will prefer Plato, who in spite of his difficulties is much easier to read than Aristotle, yet all must venerate the latter as a great intellectual phenomenon, to which scarcely any parallel can be suggested. . . . Here we have to consider him as the philosopher, who resuming in himself all the results of ancient speculation, so elaborated them into a co-ordinate system that for twenty centuries he held the world a slave." *op. cit.*, v. i, pp. 264-5.

Prof. Tyndall says of him:—

"It was not, I believe, misdirection, but sheer natural incapacity which lay at the root of his mistakes. As a physicist, Aristotle displayed what we should consider some of the worst attributes of a modern physical investigator—indistinctness of ideas, confusion of mind, and a confident use of language which led to the delusive notion that he had really mastered his subject, while he had as yet really failed to grasp the elements of it." (*The Belfast Address in op. cit.*, p. 485.)

Finally:—

"His was the proud distinction of having discovered and fully drawn out the laws under which the mind reasons in deductive reasoning. That in deduction the mind proceeds from some universal proposition and how it proceeds—these were the first things which Aristotle had to tell the world. The modern attempts to impugn these principles, and to show that the mind does not reason from universals are a failure. They confuse inductive with deductive reasoning and ignore the case of a science like geometry, which is all deduction." (Sir Alex. Grant, Bart., L. L. D., *Aristotle in Ency. Brit.*, v. ii, p. 516, 9 ed., New York, 1878.)

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## CHAPTER II.

## MODERN AGNOSTIC DOCTRINES.

§ 7.—*Bacon.*

If we disregard its antique form, Agnosticism culminated in the Sophists' supreme dictum, that all cognition is encircled within the circumference of the mind's affections, i. e. it does not transcend the phenomenal or subjective impressions of the *Ego*. For this is also the final word of actual Agnostic philosophy. In this their message to this age, the trinity of the latest apostles, Messrs. Huxley, Tyn-dall and Spencer are in exultant accord. In beginning therefore to trace the resuscitation and growth of Modern Agnosticism from Bacon to Mr. Spencer, we are viewing not so much a *progression* as a *retrogression*, not so much an *onward* as a *backward* march to the days when the voice of Protagoras and the others spoke to the cities of Greece.

Lord Bacon, Francis of Verulam, the first distinguished departer from the teachings of Aristotle, conferred a lasting boon on humanity by taking the physical sciences out from obscurity, and putting them in the places of honor which were rightly theirs. His hostility to the Greek philosopher manifested itself in the title he gave to the second part of his wonderful work *The Great Instauration*: I refer to his *Novum Organum*, the *Organum* of Aristotle was undoubtedly getting too old. That this hostility should go to such an extent in a man of Bacon's extensive knowledge, as not to stop short, at what we shall characterize in mild terms, as reckless mis-interpretation, is marvelous even in a mean adversary. He portrays Aristotle as "banishing God the fountain of final causes, and substituting nature in his stead,"<sup>1</sup> whereas the veriest tyro in philosophy has heard of the Stagyrte's famous proof of the existence of God. Scarcely less marvelous is his use of the epithet *Sophistic*<sup>2</sup> as applied to the philosophy of Aristotle. This, and similar stig-mata are fastened by no other opponent either ancient or modern

<sup>1</sup> *Advancement of Learning*, in *Bacon's Physical and Metaphysical Works*, pp. 141-2. Edited by Jos. Devey, M. A. (Bohn's Library), London, 1891.

<sup>2</sup> *Novum Organum*, Book i, *Aphorism* lxiii, in *op. cit.*, p. 400.

on the name of that "sublime and pathetic figure who enriched and ennobled" not only Greek philosophy, but the philosophies of all ages and climes.<sup>1</sup> But to pass from the men to what is more important, their works, it is not true that Aristotle taught the syllogism to the gross neglect of induction.<sup>2</sup> No one more clearly poised the two; a foot-note by the editor, at the bottom of the page from which we have just quoted, very pertinently says:—

"In our mind we are of accord with the Stagyrte who propounds, as far as we can interpret, two modes of investigation,—the one by which we ascend from particular and singular facts to general laws and axioms, and the other by which we descend from universal propositions to the individual cases which they virtually include . . . and whoever restricts logic to either process, mistakes one half of its province for the whole; and if he acts upon his error, will paralyse his methods, and strike the noblest part of science with sterility."

This observation applies to Bacon who says:—"our only hope then is in genuine induction."<sup>3</sup> This he states in entire repudiation of the syllogism. How differently Aristotle speaks in laudation of him who was the first and great inventor of Induction! "For there are two things in science," says Aristotle, "which one might justly ascribe to Socrates; now, I allude to his employment of inductive arguments and his definition of the universal: for both of these belong to a science that is conversant about a first principle."<sup>4</sup>

There is no one now who will follow Bacon's division of the sciences of Metaphysics and Physics; to the latter he assigns all *efficient* causes, limiting the former to the formal and final causes.<sup>5</sup> Whereas the teaching of the Stagyrte, which draws the dividing line between these sciences, from the distinction of their objects, is as much an authoritative dogma now as it was in the brightest days of the Schoolmen. "To physical or Natural sciences," he writes, "belongs the study of material things as far forth as they partake of *motion*," to Metaphysics, on the contrary, pertains the investigation of entities 'in so far' as they are 'entities';<sup>6</sup> in a word—Physics is the science of *Motion*, Metaphysics the science of *Being as such*.

<sup>1</sup> G. L. Fonsegrive, *François Bacon*, pp. 80, sqq., Paris, 1893.

<sup>2</sup> *Novum Organum*, *op. cit.*, p. 384. Conf. Abbot, *The Religion of Science*, p. 179, 3 ed., Boston, 1888.

<sup>3</sup> *op. cit.*, in *Novum Organum*, p. 386.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 359.

<sup>5</sup> *Advancement of Learning*, Book iii, ch. iv, p. 125, in *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> *Metaph.*, Book x, ch. iv, p. 287, *ed. cit.* Conf. Very Rev. A. F. Hewitt, C.S.P., *Rational Demonstration of the Being of God*, in Neely's *History of the Parliament of Religions*, p. 76, 3 ed., Chicago, 1893.



In the twelfth and eight following 'Aphorisms' of the *Novum Organum*, Bacon charges the Scholastics, the inheritors of the Aristotelian Philosophy, with confusions, ambiguities and other defects of method and conception. The more modern opponents of the schools do not seem to agree with this accusation. John Stuart Mill prefaces the first book of his *Logic* with the following quotations:—

"La scolastique, qui produisit dans la logique, comme dans la morale et dans une partie de la métaphysique, une subtilité, une précision d'idées, dont l'habitude inconnue aux anciens, a contribué plus qu'on ne croit au progrès de la bonne philosophie."—Condorcet, *Vie de Turgot*."

"To the schoolmen the vulgar languages are principally indebted for what precision and analytic subtlety they possess."—Sir W. Hamilton, *Discussions in Philosophy*."<sup>1</sup>

In concluding our observations on Bacon, we would say, that apart from the impulse he gave to the study of the science of nature, his pretensions to mental sovereignty have wrought incalculable harm in philosophy. His vast and varied knowledge, his extraordinary endowments might have been employed "not to subdue all opinions, as Alexander did all nations; and thus erect himself a monarchy in his own contemplation" so that in very truth it may be said of him what he unjustly said of Aristotle:—

"Felix doctrinae praedo, non utile mundo  
Editus exemplum."<sup>2</sup>

### § 8.—*Descartes*.

The impetus given to the Natural Sciences by the works of Bacon, and the sublime discoveries of Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo, infused into the European mind a new spirit of study and observation of *nature*. This new impulse tended to the neglect and consequent discredit of Metaphysics. With the Reformation, the Protestant and infidel portion of Europe looked on the old Church as an effete religious civilization, and the Aristotelian philosophy, because of its connection with the Church's teachings, seemed an object of suspicion and worthy of neglect. Human nature is given to extremes. Even were the old Church deserving of the reprobation

<sup>1</sup> *A System of Logic*, p. 10, People's ed., London and New York, 1893.

<sup>2</sup> *Bacon's Works*, *op. cit.*, p. 124.—Note: the above quotation is from Lucan, x, 21.

tion pronounced by the Reformers, it would not follow that the Scholastic philosophy deserved a similar destruction.

The upshot of all this was that men were restless for new opinions. Bruno made all things God, Vanini all things matter, Campanella existence thought, and thought sensation, Montaigne and Charron indulged in fashionable skepticism; in a word, the spirit of philosophic revolt had passed from the Protestant countries and made itself felt all over Europe. This revolt has been characterized as "the upturnings of a volcano;" the ambition of each rejecter of Aristotle's tenets, was to find something new to put in their place. This was the sixteenth century as Descartes appeared. Bacon had consecrated the *Organum of Induction*, Descartes comes to consecrate the *Organum of Doubt*. Seeing the philosophies tossed into universal confusion, he thinks it safer to set aside all opinions and to set out alone on the voyage after truth. He says:—

"I thought that I could not do better than resolve to sweep them"—viz.; his opinions—"wholly away, that I might be afterwards in a position to admit either others more correct, or even the same when they had undergone the scrutiny of Reason."<sup>1</sup>

He does this by betaking himself to a simulated universal doubt, with the saving exception of the principle, *I think therefore I am*, so that starting from this point a freeman from universal error, deceit, prejudice, he might build up, stone upon stone, the edifice of truth.

Descartes, though he assumes this principle as the first foundation of all philosophy, still by a strange anomaly, rests this very basic principle on his *clear and distinct idea*, which he announces as the general principle on which all certitude is superimposed. He enunciates it as follows: whatsoever I very clearly and distinctly conceive is true.<sup>3</sup>

Another anomaly at once presents itself: on the principle of the clear and distinct idea he finds that God exists, and, from the truth of God's existence, he derives the validity of the principle of the clear and distinct idea and of all other truths besides.<sup>4</sup> This piece of clear circular reasoning and its conjoint confusion of clashing basal principles do not augur well for the promised superstructure.

<sup>1</sup> *Discourse on Method*, in work *The Method, Meditations and Selections from the Principles of Descartes*, p. 14, 10 ed., Edinburgh and London, 1890 (edited and translated by Veitch).

<sup>2</sup> *Discourse on Method*, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33. Conf. p. 116.

<sup>4</sup> *Medit.* v. in *op. cit.*, pp. 148, 150.



The Universal Methodic Doubt sounds like a bugle-blast against the old philosophy, a war-call summoning in new forces to take and occupy the philosophic kingdoms; it was Descartes' way of introducing an intended revolutionizing philosophy.

His clear and distinct idea is devoid of original merit, it is a loose form of the Peripatetic criterion of certitude, viz., objective evidence or the intellectual splendor of truth, revealing it to the eye of the intellect, analogous to the manner in which light and color manifest material objects to the eye of the body. The way Descartes derives the conception of God's existence has the prerogative of originality. We clearly perceive, said he, that God exists, this notion is too noble to spring from anything finite, wherefore it is immediately impressed on our minds by the Divinity.<sup>1</sup> His principal proof, however, of the divine existence is:—

"That we may validly infer the existence of God from necessary existence being comprised in the concept of him."<sup>2</sup>

This is the well known *Cosmological* argument first propounded by St. Anselm in his *Proslogium* cap. v, and in his *Monologium* cap. civ, and confuted by St. Thomas and the Schools.<sup>3</sup>

From the existence of the Divine Being he deduces the existence of the extra-mental world. The received doctrine that things external act on our senses, and thus bring us to their knowledge, he considers untrustworthy because of the fallaciousness of the senses.<sup>4</sup> But, he says, we *clearly conceive* the universe as distinct from God and ourselves. This *clear and distinct idea* does not come from sense. It must consequently come from God, who would, without question, deserve to be regarded as a deceiver, if he directly and of himself "presented to our mind the idea of this extended matter, or merely caused it to be presented to us by some object which possessed neither extension, figure nor motion."<sup>5</sup>

If there be no causal communication between us and external reality, how does that reality stand related to us? Descartes replies that "the idea of it is formed in us *on occasion* of objects

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 201, in *Principles of Philosophy*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199, and *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> S. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, 1, q. 2, a. 1, ad. 2. and *Cont. gent.*, lib. i, cap. 10 et 11, et *De potent. quaest.* vii, art. 2 ad 11.

<sup>4</sup> *op. cit.*, pp. 119, 120, in *Meditation* iii.

<sup>5</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 232, in *Principles of Philosophy*.

existing out of our minds.”<sup>1</sup> The ideas of the universe and the individual concrete objects which make it up, he describes as *adventitious*. If these ideas are not *caused* but simply *occasioned* by experience, they must be produced by God in our minds, as often as objects appear before the senses, and for each individual case. Descartes does not state this, but it is the sole admissible hypothesis.

But if individual percepts are not empirically derived, as the Scholastics and the great body of realistic philosophers, in their train, inform us, how will it be with generalized concepts, and the universal principles which underlie all human thinking? These *a fortiori* are not caused by sensuous objects, nor is it necessary to invoke the divine intervention as in the case of individual things, for the faculty itself has the *innate* or inborn power to produce them. Descartes does not tell us *how* the faculty produces them. The Schoolmen concede the same power to the human faculty, but besides they acquaint us with the *how*, viz. the mind, when it contemplates the individual cognitions deduced from individual objects, by its innate power generalizes those cognitions. Thus when I see a man, an *individual* man, I at once possess the idea of man *in general*, of the *genus* man: when I see that *this* two and two before me make *this* four, I at once come to the knowledge that *all* twos and twos make four.

Descartes expounds his *innate* ideas in these words:—

“For, as I have the power of conceiving what is called a thing, or a truth, or a thought, it seems to me that I hold this power from no other source than my own nature.”<sup>2</sup>

If this exposition be correct, the common conviction that Descartes’ *innate ideas* originated with Plato, and are different from and hostile to Aristotle, seems not to be borne out by fact. The theory is too incomplete to be hostile to anything. The real cause of alarm is, not his *innate ideas*, but his negation of the derival of particular concrete cognitions from causative experience.

A sequel from this latter teaching, is the Cartesian dogma of *Mediate* or *Representative Perception*, as Sir W. Hamilton has called it. It is that “the unextended mind cannot have an *immediate* apprehension of extended reality in any manner. It can directly know only its own states.”<sup>3</sup> In another form: the *direct* and *im-*

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.—The Italics are mine.

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.*, in *Meditation* iii, p. 118. Conf. pp. 287, 288, in *Notes on Innate Ideas*.

<sup>3</sup> Maher, S. J., *Psychology*, p. 92, New York, Cincinnati, Chicago.

mediate object of the mind's perceptions, is its own ideas, so that by those ideas it cognizes the outer world or material non-ego. This makes the apprehension of the material world *indirect* and *mediate*, and the theory is termed *Representationalism*, as put opposite the tenet of immediate perception of the universe, which is denominated *Presentationalism*.

Representationalism is the real modern *starting point* of modern Agnosticism. Let us see how he gets it. Material things are the *sole occasions* of the ideas that represent them: we know they exist, not because they causally reveal themselves to us, but because God is veracious. The process is: first *the ideas*; then *the divine veracity*; lastly, by inference, the *knowledge of things*. Descartes does not make this or any ratiocination: but he states the doctrine in several places.<sup>1</sup>

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were a mental revolutionary spirit. The personification and human expression of that spirit was Descartes. He began by Doubt, and that Doubt has run like a stream, or rather I should have said, has rushed like a torrent, through all the skeptical systems, and chiefly through the several schools of Agnosticism.

The *I think therefore I am* was enunciated first by St. Augustine when he said:—

"Si enim fallor sum."<sup>2</sup>

Besides, both before and after him, it has been considered, not alone by philosophy but also by ordinary common sense, as the first fact and prerequisite of all thinking. It was the reduction of all cognition within the circle of this self-consciousness, it was the repudiation of the world of objects as causes or sources of cognition, it was the rejection of all the percipient faculties, and first of all, of the senses, as direct acquirers and contemplators of truth, it was this line of march of the *I think therefore I am* that was original in the new philosophy and characteristic of it.

It will seem to the most casual observer that such a scheme of thought courteously invites every Agnostic inclination. For if the material objects, which seem so much to affect our senses, only seem and do not, if the evidence of their causal connection is vanity,

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, *Meditation*, vi, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> *De Civit. Dei*, lib. xi, cap. 26, in P. L., t. vi, p. 339.



will the belief that, the Deity is at hand every moment, disclosing to us the world, bring with it evidence of a clearer and stronger light? If we know nothing, except as a direct report from consciousness, or inferentially from such a report, how shall we cross the chasm which divides the subjective world of mind from the objective universe of things? The knowledge of the divine veracity, we are told, is the bridge. This implies that God exists. We repeat the question: how shall we know that God exists? how shall we cross the bridge from the mere subjective idea of God to its objective reality?

Enclosure within the edifice of consciousness, more intricate and bewildering than the Egyptian or Cretan labyrinth, the knowledge of the subjective affections of the mind and nothing beyond this, does not seem a difficult corollary from the method and march of Descartes. It is its natural, its logical conclusion.

§ 9.—Prof. Huxley on the "*I think therefore I am.*"

Descartes' influence on the current Agnosticism does not appear to be of a direct and immediate nature, but rather indirect and mediate by way of Locke and Hume. Prof. Huxley asserts the contrary, and goes so far as to identify the Cartesian axiom *I think therefore I am* with agnostic phenomenalism. It is pertinent to weigh Prof. Huxley's reasons, not only because the true nexus between the Cartesian and agnostic philosophies, is a matter which it is our duty to establish, but also because the agnostic doctrine respecting this nexus presented by such an eminent pen, merits a hearing, and must needs shed copious light on the question.

Prof. Huxley delivered an address to the Cambridge Young Men's Christian Society on Descartes' "*Discourse touching the Method of using one's Reason rightly and of Seeking Scientific Truth.*" Prof. Huxley sets out with the following statements. First, that the central proposition of the whole "*Discourse*" is the golden rule—give unqualified assent to no propositions but those the truth of which is so clear and distinct that they cannot be doubted."<sup>1</sup> Secondly, that "the enunciation of this great first commandment of Science consecrated Doubt. It removed doubt from the seat of

<sup>1</sup> *Lay Sermons, Essays and Reviews*, p. 281, *On Descartes' Discourse*, London and New York, 1893.

penance among the grievous sins to which it had long been condemned . . . . Descartes was the first among the moderns to obey this commandment deliberately."<sup>1</sup>

The "golden rule" mentioned above, is not proper of the Cartesian philosophy, it is common to all philosophies. There is no philosopher nor sect of philosophers but professes this "golden rule." Indeed it is the *only* rule they have in common. If this is doubt, Prof. Huxley, we are all doubters. Does it not seem rather a principal of not *doubt* but *prudence*? a principal of *precaution* not *rashness*, the avoidance, if we may so put it, of making *rash* judgments in philosophy? The propositions therefore that, "the enunciation of this great first commandment of science consecrated Doubt; It removed doubt from the seat of penance" etc.; and that "Descartes was the first among the moderns to obey this commandment deliberately," may be very nice poetry, they may be beautiful specimens of the cunning of the brilliant pen which Prof. Huxley knows how to use so well, but they do not seem to stand the gaze of a slight and cursory scrutiny.

The peculiar form and method of the Cartesian Doubt lies, as we have remarked, and as Descartes himself has stated, in the temporary deposition of all verities, except the—"I think therefore I am"—and the departure from that, as the first and basic principle, on which to lay the superstructure of a firm philosophical science. The other philosophers—and I think Prof. Huxley will find himself among their number if he will enter just a moment into his psychological conscience—have not deemed this formal and professional *method of so-called Doubt* necessary. Every true thinker examines the first principles of Knowledge, and, while he is in the act of discussing any one verity, he makes abstraction of all the rest. This, for all intents and purposes, reaches the proposed end as efficaciously as if he bade a Cartesian good-by to every other truth under the sun.

I do not think Prof. Huxley will make reply that Descartes had the advantage of starting at the beginning, and of having thus disencumbered himself of any latent prejudice. We do not think Descartes started at the beginning as he professed to do. The affirmation "I think" from which Descartes made the illation "therefore I am," is no doubt the first fact of human experience,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281.



but it is not the first principle of knowledge. If we do *not pre-suppose and pre-admit the principle of contradiction*, viz.—that it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be at the same time and in the same circumstances—what will become of Descartes' prime principle and first foundation, "I think?" Without the principle of contradiction, the statements *I think* and *I don't think*, *I now am thinking*, and *I now am not thinking*, will be in equal glory, the one will be as true as the other, and the Cartesian first principle 'I think' will fade like a fair morning dream. A man cannot say 'I think' unless in virtue of the principle of contradiction; it is implied in it, it is the very life of the statement, as it is the very life and prime reason of all truths, logically prior to them all, yet still co-existent with them, because they cannot exist without it. Descartes did not begin at the beginning, still, that beginning was taught every philosophical novice by Descartes' Catholic teachers, whom Prof. Huxley does not lose the opportunity of qualifying as doling out, except in mathematics, what "was devoid of real and solid value."<sup>1</sup>

Prof. Huxley next portrays Descartes as reasoning this wise on our thoughts:—"As thoughts they are real and existent and the cleverest deceiver cannot make them otherwise" (p. 283). And then, at once, without any intermediation of proof, he springs to the inference—"Thus thought is existence . . . existence is thought." This surely is not Descartes' doctrine, he admitted the existence of the material universe, and, in Prof. Huxley's own admission, opposed it to thought and spirit (p. 294). If the inference is not Descartes', it is plainly Prof. Huxley's. By some kind of an intellectual performance, the Professor seems to think that if Descartes did not philosophize in his fashion, he should have done so, and then by a returning mental leap and spring, he picks up his own conclusions and exhibits them as the progeny of the Cartesian principles (pp. 286-7). What makes all this more wonderful still, Prof. Huxley informs us, and repeats the information, that his mode of procedure is that *followed and indicated* by Descartes (p. 287).

If the illation "thought is existence" is not Cartesian nor provable by Cartesian theory, even in the skilled right hand of Prof. Huxley, he, however, annexes a demonstration taken from the

<sup>1</sup>*op. cit.*, p. 280.

Agnostic treasury. He writes: "so far as we are concerned, existence is thought, all our conceptions of existence being some kind or other of thought" (p. 283). A word on this teaching seems in place, as the writer of it will insist that it is the "ultimate issue of Descartes' argument" (p. 286). We need not repeat nor insist that, in virtue of Prof. Huxley's own admission as stated above, this is historically incorrect as far as Descartes' is concerned, it must therefore stand or fall, as an isolated Agnostic affirmation, supported by the Agnostic principle which Prof. Huxley brings to its relief. "Existence is thought," he says, "all our conceptions of existence being some kind or other of thought." In simple terms, existence is thought because we conceive it as thought." *Pace* Prof. Huxley this is not true, we do not conceive existence as thought, but as the *object* of thought. What is more we conceive existence as independent of thought. Did Prof. Huxley believe that the young men of Cambridge existed, because during his "Address," they were present to his thoughts? Were his thought and their existence identical? Did he not know that they existed and sat before him, independently of his or any other person's thought? If "existence is thought," we must suppose that Prof. Huxley ceases to exist when he retires to rest every night, and resumes existence when he awakes in the morning. Prof. Huxley may indulge in this pleasant process of nocturnal annihilation and matutinal re-creation of himself, each time that he ceases to think and each time that he resumes his thoughts, but this is not the lot of ordinary mortals—"which of you by taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit?"

Neither do we think is it the case with Descartes, who—we cannot repeat it too often—not only did not teach the identity of existence and thought, but by Prof. Huxley's own confession, admitted *material* existences as a distinct and independent classification from *thinking* existences (p. 294). But Prof. Huxley continues, "it is proper for me to point out that we have left Descartes himself some way behind us" (p. 286). Very true, Descartes did not travel that road. He subjoins, "he stopped at the famous formula, 'I think, therefore I am.'" Assuredly, he stopped there, that is where he began. This beginning was the fundamental principle of Descartes' method. If you do not stop and start here but leave Descartes, as you say, "some way behind" you, you may be following some other method, but not Descartes'. Prof. Huxley

immediately pursues,—“But a little consideration will show this formula—that is ‘I think, therefore I am’—to be full of snares and verbal entanglements. In the first place, the ‘therefore’ has no business there. The ‘I am’ is assumed in the ‘I think,’ which is simply another way of saying ‘I am thinking’ and in the second, ‘I think’ is not one simple proposition but three distinct assertions rolled into one. The first of these is, ‘something called I exist;’ the second is, ‘something called thought exists;’ and the third is, ‘the thought is the result of the action of the I.’ Now it will be obvious to you, that the only one of these three propositions which can stand the Cartesian test of certainty is the second.” Apart from Prof. Huxley’s avowal of it, as manifested in the context as we quote it, it will be obvious to any one, that this passage is the tearing to utter shreds of the principle which Descartes set down, plain and unvarnished, as the starting point of all philosophy.

Prof. Huxley continues on the same page and the following (286, 7). “But it is beside my purpose to dwell upon the minor points of the Cartesian philosophy. All I wish to put clearly before your minds thus far, is that Descartes, having commenced by declaring doubt to be a duty, found certainty in consciousness alone; and that the necessary outcome of his views is what may properly be termed Idealism; namely, the doctrine that, whatever the universe may be, all we can know of it is the picture presented to us by consciousness.”

So the doctrine, “I think, therefore I am,” which Descartes laid down as the key-note of all philosophy, is “a minor peculiarity of the Cartesian philosophy?”—We have given our opinion of the next statement namely that “Descartes having commenced by declaring doubt to be a duty, found certainty in consciousness alone.” If you remember, Prof. Huxley, on page 281, called this the “central” proposition, “the golden rule” of Descartes’ Method. He formulated it in this fashion—“This golden rule is—give unqualified assent to no propositions but those the truth of which is so clear and distinct that they cannot be doubted.” As we have said, this “golden rule” is not proper of Descartes, but is common to all philosophies; the shibboleth of all philosophic creeds, skepticism alone ruled out, is this very “golden rule.” We would not iterate this evident assertion did not Prof. Huxley’s iteration force



us to do so. As to the last statement, that "the necessary outcome of his (Descartes') views is 'Idealism,'" we need not repeat what we have already remarked. "Idealism," or in other words Prof. Huxley's Agnosticism, is not the outcome of Descartes' views as he himself developed them. Prof. Huxley, as we indicated, will not deny the historical truth of this assertion. Neither can it be the outcome in Prof. Huxley's mind if he gives the matter a little logical scrutiny. He cannot scatter to the winds of heaven the life-principle of Descartes' system, and then educe from its destruction a theory which he designates its "outcome."

The mode of reasoning adopted by Prof. Huxley, and which we have been considering, is the same throughout the rest of the Essay on Descartes' "*Discourse*." In our opinion, he has not rightly interpreted, but seems, on the contrary, to have shot wide of the mark of the Cartesian philosophy. This seems especially so in his identification of Descartes' metaphysics with modern Agnostic metaphysical belief. The whole world knows that Descartes has been an important factor in the making of modern scientific thought. Modern scientific thought, however, and agnostic so-called scientific thought are not convertible terms, and Descartes who was a sound theist, maugre his great mistakes, had sufficient mental acumen not to profess a theistic metaphysics and an anti-theistic physics.

§ 10.—*Locke*.

As Hume, at a subsequent period, woke Kant from his "dogmatic slumbers" as he terms them, so Descartes aroused Locke from his psychological repose, in the truths the great Peripatetic intellects had pondered and decided upon. The Englishman's mind had a more empiric bent than that of his predecessor. The *First Book* of his wonderful work is entirely taken up with the confutation of the Cartesian *innate ideas*.<sup>1</sup> At the same time this is not a return to the Schoolmen. The worn Scholastic adage read, *nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu*, attributing the senses as the first and immediate channels of knowledge, the gates through which cognition passes and is poured into the noble treasury of the intellect. Locke leaves this midway path and passes to the opposite side of the road, and while he defends experience as the causative

<sup>1</sup> *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, pp. 1-57, new ed., London.

font of particular concrete knowledge, he identifies *sense* and *intellect*, and acknowledges no cognition but the sensuous. Locke does not tell us his reasons for the confusion of sense and intellect. Nothing was and is more emphasized by the Scholastics than this distinction, in this, primarily, they place the essential variance between man and the brute creation. Descartes was so absorbed in the subjective study of consciousness that he considers the acts of the percipient faculties, indiscriminately under one category, that is as units of consciousness. In this way he makes volition (*velle*), intellection (*intelligere*), and sensation (*sentire*) all come under the one definition of thought.<sup>1</sup> And, a little lower down, in speaking of the consciousness of seeing or walking, he says :—

“If I mean the sensation itself, or consciousness of seeing or walking, the knowledge is manifestly certain, because it is then referred to the mind which alone perceives or is conscious that it sees or walks.”<sup>2</sup>

Here the confounding of *sensation* and *consciousness* or mind is apparent. It would appear probable therefore that unacquaintance with the metaphysics of the schools, and the confusion in Descartes’ use of terms, and his consequent ambiguous doctrine of the nature of consciousness, together with Locke’s well known empiric tendencies were the potent factors of the latter’s sensationalism. This sensationalism is beyond the shadow of a doubt. All cognitions of external objects he calls *sensation*; all knowledge which the mind acquires by reflecting on its own operations, he names *reflection*. These two comprise all knowledge; the latter “is very like” the former, he says, and “might properly enough be called *internal sense*.”<sup>3</sup>

This sensism very properly seems to regard *Substance* as a mental fiction; for the senses apprehend the surface only, the sensible qualities of things.<sup>4</sup> We subjoin his explanation of substance.—Certain companies of simple ideas go constantly together and “not imagining how these simple ideas can subsist by themselves, we accustom ourselves to supply some *substratum*, wherein they do subsist, and from which they do result; which therefore we call ‘substance.’”<sup>5</sup> This doctrine however is vacillating. In a later

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 197, in *Principles of Philosophy*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>3</sup> *op. cit.*, Book ii, ch. i, sect. iv, p. 60, and *passim*. Note.—The italics are mine.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Book iii, ch. xi, sect. ix, p. 360.

<sup>5</sup> *op. cit.*, Book ii, ch. xxiii, sect. i, p. 208.





part of the *Essay*, he seems to think that we do not supply the *substratum* called substance, and again in the same paragraph he thinks we do supply it. The first quotation is :—

“By this ‘real essence’ I mean that real constitution of any thing which is the foundation of all those properties that are combined in and are constantly found to co-exist with the nominal essence.”

Here the *substratum* called substance or essence is not supplied by us, but is the *real constitution* and *foundation* of its properties.

A little lower down, however, we have :—

“Indeed as to the real essences of substances we only suppose their being without precisely knowing what they are.”<sup>1</sup>

By these three quotations it is clear that Locke’s doctrine of Substance is ambiguous. The first and third passage make it a mental figment, the second passage endows it with objective external validity. The last part of the lines quoted—that we only suppose the being of substances “without precisely knowing what they are”—and the more clear cut statement that “we know them not,”<sup>2</sup>—are the first modern expression of the Agnostic dogma of the *unknowableness* of things-in-themselves.

Locke accepts Descartes’ doctrine of Representationalism, pure and simple, if we put the differentiating clause, that he summons no divine help to vouch for the validity of the *representation*. With him, the ideas are of themselves, *representative* of extra-mental existents. Having made *sensation* and *reflection* the sole founts of knowledge, a divine intervention has no footing in his theory. This intervention gave to Descartes an apparent bond with Realism, no such seeming link is left to Locke. He states the doctrine this wise :—

“Since the mind in all its thoughts and reasonings, hath no other immediate object but its own ideas, which it alone does or can contemplate it is evident that our knowledge is only conversant about them.”<sup>3</sup>

If “our knowledge is only conversant about” our ideas how do we cognize the outside universe? Locke does not realize the import of this doctrine, he innocently assumes that there is a nexus between the ideas and the outer universe. The dark impending figure of Idealism does not seem to have disturbed his unsuspecting spirit.

<sup>1</sup> Book iii, ch. vi, sect. vi, pp. 358-9.

<sup>3</sup> Book iv, ch. i, sect. i, p. 424.

<sup>2</sup> Book iii, ch. xi, sect. ix, p. 360.

§ 11.—*Berkeley.*

Berkeley accepted pure and simple the principles of Locke, and at once puts the problem left unsolved by his master. Is there any causal intromission between the mind and external reality? For if "all our knowledge is only conversant about" our ideas, where is the voucher that aught else exists? How explain our cognition of the material universe? This cognition is unreal, hence the material universe is unreal, it has no objectivity outside the thinking subject. That is how Berkeley justly reasons from the premisses of Locke.

"For as to what is said of the absolute existence of unthinking things, without any relation of their being perceived, that seems perfectly unintelligible. Their *esse is percipi*, nor is it possible they should have any existence out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them."<sup>1</sup>

A corollary from this teaching is Berkeley's famous definition of *matter*. It has no existence out of the mind, this is clear: it has no existence in the mind, as an actual perception or modification of the mind, or as a collection of such perceptions or modifications, for they are the sensible qualities of matter. The sole alternative left is that it be a possibility of such modifications or feelings. In this wise, he defines matter as "a permanent possibility of sensations."<sup>2</sup> The pious bishop of Cloyne will not however extend this idealism to its full logical bearings, he shrinks from extending it to intellectual substances, for instance the human soul, the existence of the Infinite Being, the prospects the possibility of an immortal life. This remained for Hume.

§ 12.—*Hume.*

Starting from Berkeley's deduction from the principles of Locke, viz., that of bodies the *esse is percipi*, that they have no "existence out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them," Hume brings the theory to its full extension. If all our knowledge, reasons he, is encircled in sense, and if sense cannot discern aught but sensations or perceptions, the *esse* of all things and of mind itself must be consimilar with the *esse* of bodies:—

<sup>1</sup> *Berkeley's Works*, v. i, § iii, p. 83, London, 1843 (edited by Wright).

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Adamson, *Berkeley, Ency. Brit.*, v. iii, p. 508, 9 ed., New York, 1878.

"What we call mind is nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions, united together by certain relations and supposed though falsely to be endowed with a perfect simplicity and identity."<sup>1</sup>

This, it is clear, is the full and substantial evolution of Locke's sensationalism. Locke would not have wished it to come to this, but, as it stands, it is the crowning and substantial consummation of sensualistic idealism. It now remains for its author to methodize his doctrine. With Locke, he of course discards the distinction between the sensuous representation and the mental image, and sustains "*reflection*" and "*sensation*" as the two all-embracing fountains of knowledge. However, he rejects the division into "*sensation*" and "*reflection*," and for it substitutes "*impressions*" and "*ideas*" as facilitating a clearer and more scientific exposition. His illustrious expounder makes this exposition in the following statement:—

"Under 'impressions' he includes 'all our more lively perceptions when we hear, see, feel, love or will;' in other words, 'all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul.' . . . 'Ideas,' on the other hand, 'are the faint images of impressions in thinking and reasoning, or of antecedent ideas.'"<sup>2</sup>

Again, according to Locke's definition, "knowledge is the perception of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas." Hume tacitly accepts this definition. Prof. Huxley comments on the acceptance in these words:—

"It follows that neither simple sensation, nor simple emotion, constitutes knowledge; but that, when impressions of relation are added to these impressions, or their ideas, knowledge arises; and that all knowledge is the knowledge of likenesses and unlikenesses, co-existences and successions."<sup>3</sup>

Here we have Hume's theory of knowledge in a nut-shell as he deduced it from Locke: 1. All our perceptions, of whatever nature, as they make their first appearance in the soul, are classified as "*impressions*." 2. The faint images of these "*impressions*," as they exhibit themselves in the operations of thinking and reasoning, are categorized as "*ideas*," also the images of antecedent ideas. 3. Neither of these categories however merit the name of knowledge, they are elements or materials out of which knowledge is

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book i, p. 268, Edinburgh, 1828 (ed. of Black & Tait). Conf. p. 331.

<sup>2</sup> Huxley, *Hume*, p. 62, New York (Morley Series).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.



made. When the mind perceives the *relations* of "impressions" or "ideas," then and only then knowledge appears. Knowledge is the perception of the *relations* of similitudes and dissimilitudes, co-existences and successions.

The Schoolmen denominate all sensuous perceptions, mental concepts, and "judgments" or the apprehensions of the likenesses and unlikenesses of the objects of two ideas, as knowledge. The last of course they consider as most perfect or completed knowledge. Locke, despite his own definition, accepts this classification, in so far as the inclusion of simple sense perceptions is concerned. Having divided knowledge into "intuitive" or the *immediate* perception of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas,<sup>1</sup> and "demonstrative" or the perception of agreement or disagreement by means of demonstration,<sup>2</sup> he adds the third class referred to, viz., simple sensible perceptions:—"I think," he says, "we may add to the two former sorts of knowledge, this also, of the existence of particular external objects, by that perception and consciousness we have of the actual entrance of ideas from them, and allow these three degrees of knowledge, viz., intuitive, demonstrative and sensitive."<sup>3</sup>

Whence it follows that Locke's definition of knowledge is obscure, and that Hume did not understand him. But a more important point, the important point, and the *crux* and confusion of sensationism, is the explanation of perceptions of *relation*. The question formulates itself into—how does the mind perceive, whence come the perceptions of *relation*, of likenesses and unlikenesses, co-existence and succession, cause and effect? If Hume solves this question, he puts to shame his adversaries, this is the issue.

Prof. Huxley begins his observations on Hume's views on this matter, by conceding that "the ultimate analysis of the "contents of the mind turns upon that of impressions," and that "whatever we discover in the mind beyond these elementary states of consciousness, results from the combinations and the metamorphoses which they undergo."<sup>4</sup>

Perceptions of *relation*, accordingly, we must expect to find treated either as *impressions*, or particular combinations of those impressions, or certain forms of their metamorphoses. But what *do* we find? We find Hume avowing that they are the mysterious inexplicable,

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, Book iv, chap. ii, sect. 1, p. 433.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, sect. 14, p. 439.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, sect. 2, p. 434.

<sup>4</sup> Hume, pp. 63, 64, *op. cit.*



the problem in front of which sensationalism must confess itself helpless. "Original qualities of human nature" (he designates them) "which I pretend not to explain."<sup>1</sup>

In the same paragraph he says that "these qualities," (namely *relations*) "produce an association among ideas," that "they are the principles of union or cohesion among our simple ideas," that they exercise a kind of *attraction* among ideas; and in the very same part, he calls them "complex ideas," regardless of the clash of epithets. His admirer Prof. Huxley will surely be unbiased, yet nothing more vividly than the Professor's words will picture his master's failure:—

"To the reader of Hume," he writes, "whose conceptions are usually so clear, definite and consistent, it is as unsatisfactory as it is surprising to meet with so much questionable and obscure phraseology in a small space. One and the same thing, for example, resemblance, is first called a 'quality of an idea,' and secondly a 'complex idea.' Surely it cannot be both. Ideas which have the qualities of 'resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect,' are said to 'attract one another' (save the mark!) and so become associated; though in a subsequent part of the *Treatise*, Hume's great effort is to prove that the relation of cause and effect is a particular case of the process of association; that is to say, is a result of the process of which it is supposed to be the cause. Moreover, since, as Hume is never weary of reminding his readers, there is nothing in ideas save copies of impressions, the qualities of resemblance, contiguity and so on, in the idea, must have existed in the impression of which that idea is a copy; and therefore they must be either sensations or emotions—from both of which classes they are excluded."<sup>2</sup>

This is a strong arraignment. If more vigorous terms are desired, the following sentence meets the demand:—

"When he" (Hume) "discusses relations, he falls into a chaos of confusion and self-contradiction."<sup>3</sup>

Prof. Huxley is of opinion, however, despite the failure of Hume, that perceptions of relation find an adequate explanation in sensualistic Agnosticism. This explanation he attempts to supply. It is this: *relations* are simply "a kind of impressions of impressions."<sup>4</sup> Very good, but we would like to see the obvious difficulty explained, viz., if they are "impressions of impressions," must they not be copies of those impressions, and as such bear a similitude to them? It would seem so, but Prof. Huxley tells us that they are "devoid of the slightest resemblance to the other

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book i, sect. iv, p. 29, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Hume*, p. 68.

<sup>3</sup> *Hume*, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

impressions," though "they are, in a manner, generated by them."<sup>1</sup> This leaves the whole affair in mystery and despair, and the doctrine of the Stagyrite and his followers remains unanswered, viz., that sense cannot perceive relations, because all relations—whether of likeness or unlikeness, co-existence or succession or whatever else they be—imply comparison, and the act of comparing requires a supra-sensuous faculty. Perceptions of relations, therefore, which constitute all distinctively human knowledge, and without which there is no ratiocination, no science, no philosophy, seems to be not a mere hiatus in the sensism of Hume, but an argument and a fact against its very existence. This will appear more strongly so, as no follower of Hume, even down to Prof. Huxley, has advanced any explanation of this most important point which is less open to objection than the explanation of the philosopher of Ninewells.

A most logical feature in the Hume sensationalism is the rejection of the principle of causality. The causal nexus is not a fact of experience. Sense-perception is restricted to sole phenomena, these present themselves as ever succeeding one another, but the link which binds them and which establishes a causal communication and dependence is not revealed to the senses. This Hume saw, and in the repudiation of the principle of causation he brought the empiricism of Locke to its full growth and flower. Pure sensationalism, thorough idealism, both brought to their full conclusions and most logical completeness, this is the doctrine of Hume. And this doctrine is identical with the empiric Agnosticism of to-day. One distinction exists between them, if distinction it may be called in other than a nominal sense, it is this: Hume is positive and affirmative in his teachings: Empiric Agnosticism proposes the very same teachings but in an indirect and negative form. For instance Hume defines mind as "nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions." On this definition Prof. Huxley comments as follows, with a true Agnostic ring:—

"With this 'nothing but,' however, he obviously falls into the primal and perennial error of philosophical speculators—dogmatising from negative arguments. He may be right or wrong; but the most he, or anybody else, can prove in favor of his conclusion is, that we know nothing more of the mind than that it is a series of perceptions."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Hume, p. 61, *op. cit.*

The thoroughness of Hume's Empiric Agnosticism, in so far as the substance of his teaching goes, the following words of a well known writer attest :—

"As far as metaphysics is considered, Hume has given the final word of the Empirical school. It is no exaggeration to say that the more recent English school of philosophy represented by J. S. Mill, has made in theory no advance beyond Hume."<sup>1</sup>

Again :—

"Hume is the recognized prophet of the new dispensation which finds so many representatives in the science and the literature of the day ; which hold that respecting the greatest problems and ultimate issues of human life, we have no means of arriving at any conclusions."<sup>2</sup>

Finally, Prof. Huxley :—

"Hume shows himself the spiritual child and continuator of the work of Locke" and "he appears no less plainly as the parent of Kant and as the protagonist of that more modern way of thinking, which has been called Agnosticism."<sup>3</sup>

Hume, as we have declared, could find no place for the Principle of Causation in Empiricism. The easiest way was to ignore and repudiate it. Perceptions of Relations, however, he could not ignore, he could not deny their existence, as in his view they make up the whole province of knowledge. So, as we have said, he confesses his helplessness to give any account of them.

### § 13.—Kant.

Hume was satisfied with mere sense-percepts as the total sum of scientific philosophy. But Kant's mind is of an entirely different make-up. With him no philosophy is possible, unless it gives a full and satisfactory interpretation of the perceptions of relation, and of all those universal principles and laws built on and dependent on those relations ; all which principles and laws, as necessary and eternal axioms, Hume challenged as having no warranty from sensuous perception. No wonder, then, we find Kant's suspicions aroused as he reads Hume's discardure of the causal principle.<sup>4</sup> He declares :—

<sup>1</sup> Adamson, *Hume, Ency. Brit.*, vol. xii, p. 355, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Diman, *The Theistic Argument*, p. 10, Boston, 1881.

<sup>3</sup> Hume, p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> R. P. Pesch, S. J., *Kant et la Science Moderne*, p. 48 (traduit de l'Allemand), Paris.



"I first tried whether Hume's observation could not be made general and soon found that the conception of cause and effect was not by a long way the only one by which the mind cogitates *a priori*, but that metaphysics consist entirely of such."

And again :—

"Thus metaphysics, according to the proper aim of the science consists merely of synthetical judgments *a priori*."<sup>1</sup>

What are these conceptions or judgments of which "metaphysics entirely consist?" With the Scholastic thinkers, Kant teaches that there are judgments in which the concept of the predicate is found, by analysis, to be contained in that of the subject. These judgments are consequently termed *Analytic*, they also bear the name *a priori*, as they are prior to all particular experience. On the other hand, other judgments are derivable from experience alone, hence the designation *a posteriori* or posterior to experience, *Synthetic* because the mind envisaging the particular fact which it pronounces upon, sees that *de facto* the predicate is extrinsically superadded to the subject.<sup>2</sup> This classification would seem complete. No *tertium quid* seems possible. Whatever phenomenologists may theorize about universal and necessary truth and its experiential conditions, they with all schools, idealists as well as intuitionists, until the advent of Kant, harmoniously agreed that analysis and mental intuition of empirical facts constitute the two sole processes of judgments of *the thinking faculty*. Never was it dreamed that the mind *clothes the object in forms of its own*. This is the gospel of the Kantian philosophy; the following is its history.

On examination of the judgments of the mind, Kant finds that he cannot class some of them according to the old division. Some there are which are *synthetic* and yet not *a posteriori*, on the contrary, they are as strictly universal and anterior to all experience as analytical judgments are. These he names *Synthetic Judgments a priori*.<sup>3</sup> For instance, that the straight line is the shortest between two points, is a synthetic proposition; my conception of straightness contains nothing respecting length but only a quality. To effect the synthesis, the aid of the mental forms which he names *intuition and thought*, must be called in. The universality therefore and meta-

<sup>1</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 12, *Introduction* (Bohn's ed., Meiklejohn's trans.), London, 1890.

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 7, *Introduction to Prolegomena*.

<sup>3</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 9, and *passim*.



physical necessity, which belong to these judgments, come to them, not from any property of the subject postulating such a predicate, as in purely analytical judgments, nor from the existence of any experienced fact, as is the case in purely synthetical judgments, but from the subjective forms in which the mental faculty out of its own substance invests them. In a more finished and generalized form, the theory is, man brings to the materials of knowledge which he acquires by the senses, certain pure forms of knowledge, which his mind creates in itself, independently of all experience, and into which the mind fits all given material. In other words, the senses supply the material, the mind furnishes the forms of knowledge. The *material* are the phenomena which present themselves by the senses; the *forms* fashioned by the faculty are of two kinds, the Forms of *Intuition* and the Forms of *Thought*. The forms of the former are *Space* and *Time*,<sup>1</sup> those of the latter, are the Twelve Categories or original conceptions of the Understanding, in which all the forms of our judgments are conditioned, *i. e.* *Unity, Plurality, Totality,—Reality, Negation, Limitation,—Substantiality, Causality, Reciprocal Action,—Possibility, existence, Necessity.*<sup>2</sup>

These categories are purely mental evolutions, necessarily subjective or bereft of all objectivity. Objects as they are *in themselves*, are neither *one* nor *many*, for unity and plurality are forms of thought; they are not *realities*, nor *substances* nor *causes*, no nor even *existences*, nor *possibilities*, all these are forms of the thinking subject, and as the mind has no perceptions but these forms, the *thing-in-itself*, the *noumenon* is and must forever remain unknowable and unknown to the rational faculty. But the forms themselves, *phenomena* are evidently apprehensible by the faculty, *i. e.*, they are knowable and the sole objects of human knowledge:—

“It remains completely unknown to us what objects may be in themselves and apart from the receptivity of our senses. We know nothing but our manner of perceiving them.”<sup>3</sup>

This demarcation of the noumena from the phenomena, gives a solution to the contradictions which seem to be in the first principles of thought, and which Kant calls *Antinomies*. For instance he puts his first antinomy in this wise: Thesis, the world had a

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, *Transcendental Aesthetic*, p. 23, Cf. p. 33, and *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, *Transcendental Logic*, p. 64, and *sqq.*

<sup>3</sup> *op. cit.*, *Transcendental Aesthetic*, p. 37.

beginning in time, and has limits in space. Antithesis, the world had no beginning and has no limits in space. The thesis is true of the phenomenal world, the antithesis of the noumenal world; this solves the antinomy.<sup>1</sup> The salutary warning given us by the antinomies is, not to seek to know the Absolute or Noumenal, but to remain satisfied within the sphere of the Empirical or Phenomenal; this being the sole and the competent object of knowledge is free from antinomy or contradiction. The soul, the world and God, *i. e.*, the respective objects of the sciences of Rational Psychology, Rational Cosmology, and Rational Theology transcend the limits of sensible experience and of all experience, as they are known to us only in their manifestations. They are the adequate sum of all objects that we can conceive, and, as they transcend all phenomena, the philosopher of Königsberg styles his metaphysic *Transcendental Philosophy, Transcendental Idealism, Criticism*, because it denies the possibility of all transcendental or metempirical knowledge.

Rational Psychology, Rational Cosmology, Rational Theology have no objects corresponding to them in nature, they are beyond the pale of all possible cognition. Of what use are they? None whatsoever, except in so much as we know that they cannot be known.<sup>2</sup> Phenomena alone, we iterate it, are known, and not known in the true sense of the word. They have no objective validity, unless we divest them of the forms of space and time, unity, plurality, existence; and then they are as much noumena, as the transcendental ideas. Phenomena accordingly are known, but they are known only as mere perceptions, impressions, modifications, educed from the perceiving *Ego*, without existence, possibility, or anything else real; educed from the perceiving *Ego*, itself as nonexistent, non-possible, unreal as the perceived object, yes, identical with it.

This philosophic system is the first to give the explicit form, of which it vaunts itself, to Agnosticism, *i. e.*, it is the first to define *ex cathedra* the limitations of the human reason, to tell us that so much we know, beyond this we are not competent to pronounce judgment. Protagoras and Hume said we know only the phenomenal and there is naught else to be known, meaning thereby

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, *Transcendental Dialectic*, p. 266, sq.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. R. Adamson, *Kant, Ency. Brit.*, vol. xiii, p. 853, *op. cit.*

that that was all that concerned them. They did not trouble themselves, what perchance, other hypothetical orders of intelligences, in other hypothetical worlds, could or could not possibly cognize. They are at one with Kant as to the substance of the doctrine, their mode of expression is different. This mode of expression, this image and inscription coined in the brain of the theorist of Königsberg, is what differentiates the modern from the old form of Phenomenism terminating in Hume, *i. e.*, this image stamped on the antecedent substance, is the new, or rather makes it the new Agnosticism. Kantism, as a first form of the modern Agnostic doctrine, may be defined as that theory which confines all human cognition within the circle of the sole *phenomenon*, because of the necessary limitation of the human intellect, and because of its incompetence to transcend whatever passes the sphere of experience. The phenomenal object is of such a character that the faculty in cognizing it, cognizes solely what is evolved out of itself, cognizes solely mental or subjective forms, thus making the real object or *thing-in-itself* (the *ding-an-sich*) forever unknowable and unknown.

§ 14.—*Hamilton and Mansel.*

Sir W. Hamilton did not sympathize with the structure of Kant's transcendentalism, yet he was deeply impressed with his principle of the empiric limitation of knowledge. He believes in the inscrutableness of the Absolute, not because the faculty contemplates its own self-educed forms of thought as object, and is thus shut off from the noumenal universe, but, on the contrary, because the Infinite presents itself as a mere negation, the negation of the finite. This banishes the infinite God from the region of knowledge, He is to be retained however, if not consistently at least piously, in the domain of belief. He writes:—

"We must believe in the infinity of God, but the infinite God cannot by us in the present limitation of our faculties, be comprehended or conceived."<sup>1</sup>

While Sir W. Hamilton maintains, as his predecessors had done, the Relativity or phenomenal feature of human cognition, still he emphasizes it, in the double sense, that the sole empiric is commensurate with knowledge, and that there exists an inscrutable Abso-

<sup>1</sup> *Lect. on Metaph. and Logic*, vol. ii, p. 374, Boston, 1859.



lute. He asseverates—and so does Mr. Spencer in his sequel—that this theory is not new but of ancient date. They both glory in the fact, and even make out of it an Agnostic argument. Whatever may be said of the argument, the genuineness of the fact remains indubitable, as we have remarked repeatedly. With the Königsberg philosopher, the antinomies are not basic points of doctrine, but facile corollaries; with the Edinburg thinker, they rank among the cardinal principles. Sir William conceives that all knowledge lies between “opposite poles of thought;” these opposite poles of thought, are mutually contradictory propositions, they are the antinomies. The mind is entangled and lost in their contradictoriness, still reason is shown in them weak but not fallacious. They are the counter-imbecilities of reason,<sup>1</sup> not objects of thought, but the boundary fields of all knowledge; this dissipates the three sciences of *Ego*, the *World* and *God*, in a manner different but equally destructive, with Kant’s mind-forms, and reduces them to systematic nescience. On this point and on the whole Hamiltonian Agnosticism, we shall speak fully, when we enter on the examination of Mr. Spencer’s Religion.

Dean Mansel, in his *Bampton Lectures on The Limits of Religious Thought*, presented in a more popular form and specifically under the religious aspect, his master Sir W. Hamilton’s agnostic attitude. The measure of his success Dr. Gerhardt’s statement in the April number of the *Mercersburg Review* for 1860 energetically tells:—

“*The Limits of Religious Thought* is a blind surrender of Christian Faith to infidelity.”

#### § 15.—Comte.

While these philosophers are striving in England to retain the Deity to belief, the hard logic of their principles notwithstanding, the *Positive Philosophy* of Auguste Comte is produced in France, and dispenses with the Divinity in the most radical fashion.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Martineau, *Essays, Reviews and Addresses*, v. iii, p. 472–3, London, 1891.

<sup>2</sup> *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte* (trans. by Harriet Martineau), p. 26, Chicago, New York, San Francisco. Conf. R. P. Gruber, *Auguste Comte, Sa Vie, Sa Doctrine*, pp. 227, sqq., Paris, 1892, and *Le Positivism depuis Comte jusqu’à nos jours* by same Author; Huxley, *Lay Sermons, Addresses and Reviews, The Scientific Aspects of Positivism*, pp. 129 sqq., ed. quoted; Whewell, *Comte and Positivism*, *Macmillan’s Magazine*, March, 1866.



Sensuous objects are the sole knowable, all that is supersensuous, essences and causes, are vain and futile to human research. The French philosopher seems to have drunk in not alone the doctrine, but the spirit and style of thought of the Sophists, more deeply than his contemporaneous or even subsequent English co-phenomenists. Let the atoms of Democritus alone, said the Sophist professors to their disciples; the inquiry is loss of time. And so they busied themselves about Politics and Rhetoric. Instead of these arts, the creator of Positivism, when he had set aside all the objects of useless metaphysics, found the scrutiny of pure phenomena as more congenial and more philosophic.

His *Three Stages of Knowledge*, his *Religion of Humanity*—which Prof. Huxley felicitously pronounced “Catholicism *minus* Christianity”—it would not be relevant here to dwell upon. In brief, the Positive Philosophy as it came from the mind of Comte, has some small influence in his own country but none outside of it. Separated from its Positive Religion and other distinctive forms, and viewed specifically as the phenomenal theory of knowledge, which disallows all metaphysical investigation, it found some favor with the English mind.<sup>1</sup> The word “Positivist” was widely known and used in England when the term “Agnostic” was yet in its infancy; Messrs. Spencer, Huxley, Tyndall, and before them Mr. Geo. H. Lewes had to be classed, and seemed to fit in under the classification of Positivists. They, however, resented the appellation, and Mr. Spencer, to define distinctly his attitude, took the pains to write the essay in his *Recent Discussions*, which is entitled *Reasons for dissenting from the Philosophy of Comte*. Mr. J. S. Mill, however, who is in the same class with these philosophers, did not object to the name. Messrs. Harrison and Cosgrove, Dr. Bridges and the late Prof. Clifford like the name of Positivist; I suppose they regard the title of Agnostic as of too negative a nature. Agnosticism, as set off against Positivism, may be described as the phenomenal theory *plus* metaphysics or an attempt at it; conversely, Positivism, put opposite Agnosticism, is the phenomenal theory *minus* metaphysics.

This is the only philosophic system, which does not make at least an attempt at Metaphysics, which does not make at least an attempt

<sup>1</sup> Flint, *Anti-theistic Theories*, p. 505, Edinburgh and London, 1885.

to solve the triple mystery, *Man*, the *World*, *God*. For these reasons it does not seem probable that it has come to take a permanent abode among the philosophies.<sup>1</sup>

### § 16.—*Mill*.

Of modern English Agnostic Thinkers Mr. J. S. Mill has the nearest philosophic kinship with M. Comte, yet his inclinations are too metaphysically acute, not to seek to enter somewhat behind the veil of the phenomenon. But he is first and last the nineteenth century Hume. A host of passages might be cited, the following may be sufficient to exhibit their philosophic identity:—

“The idealist metaphysicians are now very generally considered to have made out their case, viz., that all we know of objects is the sensations which they give us and the order of the occurrence of those sensations.”<sup>2</sup>

He iterates Berkeley's definition of matter, Hume's description of mind, and Hamilton's circumscription of all cognition to the “phenomenal, phenomenal of the unknown.”<sup>3</sup> He denies the existence of causality or power, in every true sense of that word, however much he may retain the name. Starting from these fundamental principles, he proposes to himself, as the scope of his philosophic disquisitions, to vindicate and set forth in a more finished fashion than did Hume, the scientific and psychologic character of his master's idealist empiricism. Hume's Associationism, transmitted to him through Hartley, Priestley, Brown and his father James Mill, he makes the keystone of his psychology.<sup>4</sup> This of course is logical in a sensuous philosophy and it is true to its principles. He is equally consistent in laying a scientific basis. There are no abstract, universal and necessary, that is there are no *a priori* concepts in sensism. Science however does not seem to be able to get along without them. But this does not deter the author of the famous *Logic*. He calmly dismisses the syllogism as a *petitio prin-*

<sup>1</sup>Crozier, *The Religion of the Future*, pp. viii and ix, *Preface*, London, 1880. Conf. M. Laugel, *Les Premiers Principes de M. H. Spencer*, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Feb. 15, 1874.

<sup>2</sup>*op. cit.*, Book i, ch. iii, sect. 7, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 39, Conf., *Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy*, ch. ii, p. 245, (by J. S. Mill), New York, 1884, and Calderwood, *Bain, Mill and Jouffroy*, *London Quart. Rev.*, n. 81, art. 5, 1873, (author anonym.).

<sup>4</sup>*Logic*, Book i, ch. iii, sect. 9, p. 41, *op. cit.*

*cipii*,<sup>1</sup> *induction by simple enumeration* is put in its place ; by this he reasons from the uniformity of facts to universal laws. These universal or general laws embrace all physical, metaphysical and mathematical judgments, if such they can be called, but their universality, unlike the *a priori* metaphysics, is not based on any inherent ontological necessity because the contradictory propositions are not impossible, but because they are to the constitution of the human intellect, inconceivable.<sup>2</sup>

But how can induction by simple enumeration deduce from the mere uniformity of past experience, those universal laws, those everlasting necessary principles, which are the key-stone of Science and of Philosophy ? Mr. Mill answers this important question as follows :—hitherto the invariableness of these laws has been empirically verified, and custom has engendered in us the conviction that the same order shall continue to obtain. If it be asked, on what right and title, a persuasion founded on mere custom or repeated past experiences, can claim such sweeping mental assent, and ask to be postulated as the prime condition and natural foundation of all scientific truth ? how will the past speak for and verify the future, when there is no causal knot to tie them in the fate of inexorable necessity ? will a uniform sequence of causally unconnected, independent facts, guarantee a similar succession in the future ? or does the contrary of such a procession appear to the intellect as inconceivable ? To meet these questions a scrutiny of the genesis of the conviction is necessary, and thus the question is turned over to its psychological issue. Mr. Mill solves this riddle—as he has solved to his own satisfaction every vexed psychological problem—by the principle of the association of ideas ; for instance the hard fact of memory, the equally hard existence of moral judgments and feelings, and hardest of all, the irresistible belief in the objective outness and existence of the universe of things, yield with equal facility and ease to the potent influence of associationism.<sup>3</sup>

This great thinker has certainly presented the association—psychological view and the logical scientific message of his master, with all the ability and marvelous power of which he was capable. And as such, the teachings of Mr. Mill, viewed as a third form of the Agnostic gospel, is the extreme idealist sensism of Hume elaborated

<sup>1</sup> *Logic*, Book ii, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>3</sup> *Exam. of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, ch. ii, pp. 12, 13 and *passim*.



and put into touch with the time, by its most potent modern representative.

§ 17.—*The Modern Physical Science Agnostics.*—Huxley.

A new phase of Agnosticism—its present form—opens with the successors of Mr. Mill, I speak of the school of the present *Physical Science Agnostics*. Magnificent has been the march of the Physical Sciences in this age, splendid and stupendous the achievements of their progress. This progress ennobles and elevates civilized man as such, and the civilized communities of our race are debtors to science and scientists for the elevation. All will concede, however, who will take an impartial view of the matter, that the province of the Physical Sciences is the study or knowledge of the qualities and laws of *material nature*. The sensible, external, corporeal world is its sphere, and that inasmuch as it is subject to the test and observation of the outer senses. All impartial people will likewise concede that the physical sciences are not *all* the sciences. There is a science of Morals, a science of Metaphysics, a science of Psychology; verily these are not branches or subdivisions of Physics. In the face of these a, b, c, facts, assuredly, nothing less than mental intoxication, so to speak, superinduced by the grandeur of their triumphs in the study of nature, could have led *some* scientists to speak as they do. "I have swept the heavens with my telescope," said Lelande, "and have not found a God." "We have examined the brain with our microscope," say others, "and have not found a soul."<sup>1</sup> To look for God with a telescope, or search for the soul with a microscope, is just as wise as to try to sing with one's hand or to speak with one's ear. The telescope and microscope discern not all things, nor shall physical instruments find the glories of what is above them. Will a telescope or microscope detect a sensation? What spectroscope shall reveal the many colors of an emotion? Physical Science and every other Science teaches that if we look for anything, we have to do so with the proper instrument, the instrument which discovers the Deity is mind.

Professor Huxley and the late Professor Tyndall have been accused of this charge of claiming universal empire for Physical Science. In this spirit the Duke of Argyle rebukes Professor Huxley:—

<sup>1</sup> Momerie, *op. cit.*, pp. 26, 27.



"The first of these" (points) "concerns the use which Professor Huxley makes of the word *science*," he writes. "In common parlance this word is now very much confined to the physical sciences, some of which may be called experimental sciences, such as chemistry, and other exact sciences, such as astronomy. But Professor Huxley evidently uses it in that wider sense in which it includes Metaphysics and Philosophy. Under cover of this wide sweep of his net, he assumes to speak with the special authority of a scientific expert upon questions respecting which no such authority exists either in himself or in any one else. It seems to be on the strength of this assumption that he designates a pseudo science any opinion or teaching or belief, different from his own."<sup>1</sup>

Professor Huxley's claims for the sovereignty of science as he interprets it, his own words will best tell :—

"The progress of science means the extension of the province of what we call matter and causation, and the concomitant gradual banishment from all regions of human thought of what we call spirit and spontaneity."<sup>2</sup>

If this is the province of science, Prof. Huxley will, no doubt, be good enough to consider Newton, La Place, Brewster, Faraday and Farbes, Graham, Rowan, Hamilton, Herschel and Talbot; or at the present time, Andrews, Joule, Clerk-Maxwell, Balfour, Stewart, Stokes and William Thomson as non-scientists, or perhaps nescientists. All these admit "spirit and spontaneity," and—as Mr. Tait remarked in his reply to Mr. Froude—the former were among or are considered to have been among, if Prof. Huxley will permit me to say it, the greatest scientific thinkers, and the latter are reckoned among the ablest British scientific minds of the day. But it is well to remember that Professor Huxley is also the author of this statement :—

"It is an indisputable truth that what we call the material world is only known to us under the forms of the ideal world, and as Descartes tells us, our knowledge of the soul is more intimate and certain than our knowledge of the body."<sup>3</sup>

That is, the progress of knowledge means the extension of the province of what we call mind and soul, and the complete banishment from all regions of human thought, of what we call the *material world*. The former statement is *materialistic* and brings all things under "the extension of the province" of "matter," the latter is *idealistic* and makes all things citizens of the republic of

<sup>1</sup> *Science Falsely so Called, A Reply, Nineteenth Century*, May, 1887. Conf. same writer, *Lord Bacon versus Professor Huxley, Nineteenth Century*, Dec., 1894.

<sup>2</sup> *The Physical Basis of Life*, in *op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>3</sup> *On Descartes' Discourse* in *op. cit.*, p. 298.

spirit and of mind.<sup>1</sup> We are at a loss how to classify the author of these two statements, all that can be said is that in the latter he ranks as an idealist, in the former he is a professed materialist, however much he may resent the odium of the name. We have looked for light for the antagonism which Professor Huxley has seemed to put within himself; neither idealism nor materialism would seem to be his attitude, but an intellectual suspense between the two. In his interpretation of the view of Hume on the nature of mind, he identifies himself with the latter and reflects the image of his opinion in the following words :—

“For any demonstration that can be given to the contrary effect, the collection of perceptions’ which makes up our consciousness may be an orderly phantasmagoria generated by the Ego, unfolding its successive scenes on the background of the abyss of nothingness. . . . On the other hand, it must no less readily be allowed that, for anything that can be proved to the contrary, there may be a real something which is the cause of all our impressions; that sensations, though not likenesses, are symbols of that something; and that the part of that something which we call the nervous system is an apparatus for supplying us with a sort of algebra of fact, based on those symbols. A brain may be the machinery by which the material universe becomes conscious of itself.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus far is clear, perchance the Ego is a Fichtean world-generator, and the universe of things its product, as it evolves and unfolds itself in the phenomena of consciousness. Obversely, perchance the material universe may possess a real independent existence, may be conscious of itself through the medium of a manifold machinery of the brain, *i. e.*, the purest form of idealism and the antithetical anthropomorphous materialistic position, are in Professor Huxley’s eyes, hypotheses of equal value and merit. All this is very plain, but what follows throws it all into a muddle. He adds :—

“The more completely the materialistic position is admitted, the easier it is to show that the idealistic position is unassailable, if the idealist confines himself within the limits of positive knowledge.”

Professor Huxley has not added an explanation of this paradox, so that, in ultimate analysis, his position presents itself at one and the same time as bold, materialistic realism and as pure idealism, the harmonious coalition of the two supreme extremes.

<sup>1</sup> W. S. Lilly, *The Province of Physics, a Rejoinder to Prof. Huxley in Appendix to the work On Right and Wrong*, p. 253, 2 ed., London, 1891.

<sup>2</sup> *Hume*, pp. 79–80.

There is one thing, however, on which Professor Huxley expresses no protean view; no other Agnostic writer has drawn the logical conclusions of Agnosticism with respect to Religion and Morality as he has drawn them. He says:—

“If it” (religion) “means, as I think it ought to mean, simply the reverence and love for the ethical ideal, and the desire to realize that ideal in life, which every man ought to feel—then I say agnosticism has no more to do with it than it has to do with music and painting.”<sup>1</sup>

### § 18.—*Tyndall.*

Professor Tyndall, the second brilliant form among the three great leaders of the sect of modern physical-science agnostics, is at one with Professor Huxley on the pretensions of physical science from the agnostic standpoint;<sup>2</sup> also on the evolution of life from the potency of matter,<sup>3</sup> and on the phenomenal nature of all knowledge.<sup>4</sup> With reference to his materialism the same darkness shrouds his statements that shrouded the statements of Professor Huxley. On the one hand he tells us that he discerns in Matter “the promise and potency of all terrestrial Life,”<sup>5</sup> “and that the nebulae and the solar system, life included, stand to each other in the relation of the germ to the finished organism;”<sup>6</sup> while on the other he affirms with Du Bois-Reymond that “the passage from the physics of the brain to the corresponding facts of consciousness is unthinkable,” and that he does not think that the materialist “is entitled to say that his molecular groupings, and motions, explain every thing. In reality they explain nothing.”<sup>7</sup>

Professor Tyndall urges the concept of causality or power in its true scholastic sense. This is a deflection from the tenets of Hume and Mill in whose camp Professor Huxley is. But, though the departure be inconsistent with his sensism, still he has Mr. Spencer with him. Neither Professor Balfour Stewart nor Professor Clerk-Maxwell nor any other among the authors of our actual scientific

<sup>1</sup> *Agnosticism and Christianity, Nineteenth Century*, June, 1889.

<sup>2</sup> *Apology for the Belfast Address*, in *op. cit.*, pp. 547-8.

<sup>3</sup> *The Belfast Address*, in *op. cit.*, p. 526.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 524.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, *Apology for the Belfast Address*, p. 548.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, *Scientific Materialism*, pp. 420-1.



books, have emphasized the necessity of true causality as a scientific factor, more than Professor Tyndall has done. In his critique on Dr. Martineau's lecture on *Religion as affected by Modern Materialism*, he declares :—

“If, then, ‘Democritus and mathematicians’ so defined matter as to exclude the powers here proved to belong to it, they were clearly wrong.”<sup>1</sup>

He speaks of “the powers of matter,” of the “power locked up in a drop of water,” of “a *formative power*” coming “into play ;” this is indeed a return from a sensuous philosophy, and is consistent with the ever-enduring principles of the Stagyrte as they are found in the text-books of the Catholic philosophy.

Professors Huxley and Tyndall have embodied their views in no systematic philosophic shape, they have edited no ordered corps of Agnostic doctrine ; they could not, as what has come from their pen has been in the forms of criticisms and replies. It has been reserved for Mr. Herbert Spencer, the third of these distinguished expositors of the new and now potent school of the physical science Agnostics, it has been reserved for Mr. Herbert Spencer to reduce to a systematic unity this actual form of the agnostic creed. This he has done in his *Synthetic Philosophy*. We now pass to the special consideration of Mr. Spencer.

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<sup>1</sup> *Introduction, embracing Reflections on Materialism, op. cit., p. 345.*



## PART II.

# MR. SPENCER'S RELIGION.

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### GENERAL NOTION.

Mr. Spencer has embodied in his voluminous work, entitled the *Synthetic Philosophy*, the now flourishing form of agnostic belief, *i. e.*, the *Physical Science Agnosticism*. The *metaphysics* of Mr. Spencer's Agnosticism have been accepted in direct line from the agnostic past, from the hands of Sir W. Hamilton and Mr. Mansel. With these philosophers Mr. Spencer is of accord that all knowledge is *Relative*, viz. : that the sole *Empiric* and the sole *Phenomenal* are commensurate with *Knowledge* and that there exists an Inscrutable Absolute. True Mr. Spencer gives this philosophy a new direction, but the main body of his Metaphysics is simply the Edinburgh thinker's *Relativity of Knowledge*. Mr. Spencer's *Physics* are the Theory of Evolution with the Democritean anti-theistic brand stamped upon it. This Agnostic Metaphysics and Agnostic Physics are fused into the unity of the Synthetic Philosophy.

The distinctive feature of Mr. Spencer's Agnosticism is that, unlike all his predecessors, he believes that *Religion* is also contained in the Agnostic theory. Sir W. Hamilton believed in a Personal God, but he did so *despite* his Agnosticism. All the other chiefs encircled Agnosticism in the spheres of Science and Metaphysics. Mr. Spencer alone demands the domain of Religion also. The God of the new creed is the Inscrutable Absolute. The Absolute being unknowable and being the Ultimate Cause of all things, is designated the Unknowable, the Unknowable Cause, etc. A few words are necessary to express its attitude towards Religion and Science.

The Unknowable Cause has a two-fold function in the Synthetic Philosophy, it is the object of Religion and the foundation of

Science and Philosophy. It is the common truth on which both Religion and Science are agreed. They express its opposite sides, Science, "its near or visible side," Religion, "its remote or invisible side." This acknowledgment on the part of Religion and Science of one common unifying truth and first principle, establishes a fundamental harmony between them. This acknowledgment or agreement is The Reconciliation of Religion and Science.

The first part of the first of the ten volumes of the Synthetic Philosophy, *i. e.*, the first part of *First Principles*—*The Unknowable*, has for its scope to prove the existence of the *Unknowable* as the modern God, and to establish the *Religion of the Unknowable*. The nature of the *Unknowable* is next discussed, and finally it is put down as the common ultimate principle uniting and harmonizing Religion and Science.

The doctrine of the *Unknowable* has met with great disfavor among Mr. Spencer's English and American critics. All are agreed however that he is the only one of the English school of adversaries of Theism, who has ever attempted a Religious Agnostic system and speculated on the philosophic attitude of Science towards Religion. Professor Parsons of Harvard will, I think, represent the general *consensus* of Mr. Spencer's reviewers:—

"To minister to Religion is the highest, the consummating work of Science, but Science cannot render this service where there is no religion to accept it."<sup>1</sup>

*The First Principles* has found no great favor in foreign countries, *i. e.* among the non-English-speaking nations. The Italians look upon Materialism, Positivism and Agnosticism as the same philosophy. Büchner, Comte and Spencer are quoted at times as followers of the same sect.<sup>2</sup> The only German author of note influenced by Spencer is Dr. G. von Giz'yeki in his little work, *Die Philosophischen Consequenzen der Lamarck-Darwinischen Entwicklungstheorie*. Materialism is the prevailing anti-theistic theory in Germany. In this manner the Darwinian theory of Evolution has been applied by the materialists in that country as a potent factor in defence of the materialistic conception of the world. They have not regarded the Spencerian view of a First Cause.

<sup>1</sup> *On the Origin of Species*, Amer. Jour. of Science and Arts, July, 1860.

<sup>2</sup> G. Bartellotti, *Philosophy in Italy*, Mind, vol. iii, n. 12, Oct., 1878.

A Positivistic Materialism of the Skeptic kind seems to dominate in France among the non-theists. M. Renan and M. Taine both eschew the metempiric. "Toute métaphysique m'épouvante," says a modern writer. And Mr. Spencer is metaphysical enough. As an isolated example, M. Th. Rabot in his *Recent English Psychology* finds admiration for Mr. Spencer.

At the end of the seventh decade of this century, Messrs. Auguste Comte, J. S. Mill, Lewes and Spencer were widely read in Russia. Almost all Spencer is translated into that language. There are but three Russians in favor of modern so-called philosophy, M. M. Lesevich, Troitzky and de Roberty. No one of these, however, follows Mr. Spencer.<sup>1</sup>

We will now enter upon the examination of Mr. Spencer's *Religious Concept*. This is the task we have set for ourselves; accordingly the Concepts of Science and Philosophy, as held by Mr. Spencer, will have a subordinate place in this review. They shall be introduced only and in as far as they tend to elucidate the discussion of Mr. Spencer's Religion. Mr. Spencer's Religious Doctrine is expounded in the first part of the first volume of the *Synthetic Philosophy*, i. e., in the first part of his *First Principles*, and is headed the *Unknowable*. The examination of The Unknowable is the inquiry at issue.

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<sup>1</sup> *Mind, Notes on Philosophy in Russia*, vol. xv, no. 57, Jan., 1890.

## CHAPTER I.

MR. SPENCER'S RELIGION CONSIDERED FROM THE  
HISTORICAL STANDPOINT.§ 19.—*Religion is not Mere Nescience.*

In the First Chapter of the *Unknowable*,<sup>1</sup> Mr. Spencer treats of the Concept of Religion as contrasted with the Concept of Science. The Chapter in question is entitled *Religion and Science*. This is the most momentous question to which the human mind can address itself. Mr. Spencer brings us a new solution of the problem and asks for it Religious and Scientific sovereignty. The issue is, shall this solution of his dethrone the existing doctrines held by the vast majority of humanity of the two continents, are we to have an *Agnostic Religion* and an *Agnostic Science*? The answer depends on Mr. Spencer's presentation of his case. It is our duty to see if this presentation brings with it valid claims for the New Religion and the new Science.

Every discussion says Cicero, must begin with a definition. The disputants must be agreed on a common starting-point; the point of agreement is the definition. Mr. Spencer disagrees with his opponents on *how* the idea of God originated, *what* the true notion of God is, but, in common with all mankind, he will allow that the idea of God is the basis of all Religion.<sup>2</sup> He will admit that a Supreme Power on which man depends, which man is bound to recognize and which controls all human destiny, is the universal *consensus* of our race in respect to the notion of Religion.<sup>3</sup> This Supreme Power Mr. Spencer states is unknowable: man's *religious dependence* he puts in the fact that man depends on the Unknowable Cause as one of the effects produced by it: the concept of *religious recognition* he describes in these words—that it is “our highest duty to regard that through which all things exist as the Unknowable (§ 31,

<sup>1</sup> *Note*.—All references will be to the American edition, New York, 1891.

<sup>2</sup> G. Van Den Gheyn, *La Religion, Son Origine et Sa Définition*, p. 91, Gand et Paris, 1891.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.



p. 113). The theist, on the contrary, maintains that God is the personal intelligent, First Cause, his Maker, whom he is bound to worship and adore. Which of these two concepts is the right one, the scope of this examination of Mr. Spencer's Religion is to disclose. For the present the following general definition, common both to Mr. Spencer and the theist, will suffice as a *point de depart*: Religion is man's dependence on and recognition of the Supreme Being, the Cause of the Universe.

Now to the examination of Mr. Spencer's doctrine. In the first place Mr. Spencer presupposes the possibility of an Agnostic Religion. This might be challenged. The Ancient Agnostic fathers would have laughed at the idea of such a religion. Protagoras and Hippias did not speculate such a possibility. Lucretius, with the mind of his master, saw no God behind the atoms, and following the view of Petronius he made the gods figments generated by human fear:—

“Primus in orbe Deos fecit timor, ardua celo,  
Fulmina quum ceciderint.”<sup>1</sup>

Descending to the modern Agnostics, Berkeley, Sir W. Hamilton and Dean Mansel clung to the ancestral religion, but such a proceeding when confronted with their agnostic dogmas, has been reprobated by all thinkers as an utter metaphysical failure—Hume, despite the cloudiness of his views on Religion, as set forth in the *eleventh section* of the *Inquiry*, in *The Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, and finally in the *Natural History of Religion*, regarded theism as a purely theoretical hypothesis;<sup>2</sup> Kant in a similar manner viewed Religion as a matter beyond the competency of human reason.<sup>3</sup> But neither Hume nor Berkeley nor Kant, nor Sir W. Hamilton, nor Mr. Mill, nor Professor Tyndall nor Professor Huxley ever consider an Agnostic Religion as possible. Mr. Spencer stands alone, the sole Agnostic leader who propounds a theory of Religion. This on the face of it starts a very strong presumption against him. However, even the weight of unanimous Agnostic authority will not ban the new Religion, if it can bring the cannons of good strong arguments to its support.

<sup>1</sup> *De Nat. Rerum*, lib. vi, v. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Huxley, *Hume*, pp. 151 seqq., *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 393, *op. cit.*

The Chapter on *Religion and Science* claims that all knowledge belongs to the province of Science, thus assigning *Nescience* as the province of Religion. *Phenomena* or mere Appearances are the subject-matter of Science, the *Noumenon* or the One Reality underlying all phenomena is the subject-matter of Religion. For this reason phenomena are the sole Knowable and the noumenon is Unknowable. In a word, the sphere of Science is *phenomena* or the *knowable*, the sphere of Religion is the *noumenon* or the *unknowable*. This being the case the bearing of Religion on Science will at once stand out. The Unknowable or primal Cause is the object of Religion, but it is also recognized by Science as the substratum of all phenomena. For this reason it is the one truth that is admitted in common by Religion and Science, and this joint recognition constitutes their harmony and reconciliation.

All knowledge belongs exclusively to the domain of Science—we will examine Mr. Spencer's argument for this statement. He first tells us what he understands by the term *science*:—

"What is Science? To see the absurdity of the prejudice against it, we need only remark that Science is simply a higher development of common knowledge, and that if Science is repudiated, all knowledge must be repudiated along with it" (§ 5, p. 18).

To this definition, as it stands, no one will object. But Mr. Spencer means it to exclude religious knowledge. We will collate the following passages. Referring to Religion he characterizes it as:—

"That nescience which must ever remain the antithesis to science (§ iv, p. 17).

And on the same page he sets Religion as the opposite of knowledge by the assignment to them of different boundaries in these words:—

"If it must always continue possible for the mind to dwell upon that which transcends knowledge; then there can never cease to be a place for something of the nature of Religion."

This same antithetical contrast runs through the whole chapter, in fact it is its chief scope and aim.—What are Mr. Spencer's proofs? We have searched, with all the diligence of which we are capable, throughout the twenty-two pages which Mr. Spencer gives to the subject, and we are unable to find any form of proof, unless we consider the following explanations as meriting the name.

After the above-cited definition of Science, *i. e.*, that "Science is a higher development of common knowledge," etc., Mr. Spencer adds:—

"The extremest bigot will not suspect any harm in the observation that the sun rises earlier and sets later in the summer than in the winter. . . . Iron will rust in water, . . . wood will burn, . . . long kept viands become putrid," etc.

It is needless to add that no one will deny these truths. They are knowledge, as all the facts of the natural sciences are, but they afford no demonstration that Science viewed as antithetical to Religion, makes up all knowledge. It is one thing that the truths of the physical sciences are knowledge, it is quite another that Religion has not a title to the same name.

Mr. Spencer seems to consider the pronouncement that Science is knowledge and Religion nescience, as not needing any proof. If this is Mr. Spencer's distinctive view, we should think it would require demonstrative support; if it is the commonly accepted definition, he is, of course, justified in abstaining from a demonstration. But it is not the commonly accepted definition; we shall make good this statement.

The Sacred Scriptures predicate the *knowableness* of God as the object of Religion. We adduce the following texts:—

"Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God."

"When he shall appear, we shall be like to him: because we shall see him as he is."

"We see now through a glass in a dark manner but then face to face. Now I know in part but then I shall know even as I am known."

"When they knew God, they have not glorified him as God or given thanks."<sup>1</sup>

In the first two passages, and in the first part of the third, we are told that we shall *see* God. The *vision* of God or, as theologians term it, the *beatific vision* is the most perfect form of cognition. The other passages explain themselves.

If we consult Patristic authority the same unanimous teaching stands out equally manifest. St. Augustine may speak for the rest:—

"Cum Deum novimus, fit aliqua Dei similitudo in nobis."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Matt.*, ch. v, v. 8; *I John*, ch. iii, v. 2; *I Cor.*, ch. xiii, v. 12; *Romans*, ch. i, v. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *De Trin.*, Lib. ix, cap. ii. *Note.*—A copious array of testimonies from the Greek and Latin Fathers can be seen in Cardinal Franzelin's *sixth Thesis, on the cognoscibility of God by the light of natural reason* (*De Deo Uno*, cap. ii, p. 94, seqq., edit. tertia, Romæ, 1883).



If we study the ancient predecessors of the Scholastics, we find them admitting divine or religious knowledge. Among the Greeks Aristotle's voice may be taken as representative; he brings in the *knowledge of the Deity* under the science of metaphysics.<sup>1</sup> Among the Romans, Cicero wrote a philosophical treatise, *De Natura Deorum*, on the science of the knowledge of the Gods, and he defines Philosophy as:—

“Scientia rerum divinarum et humanarum causarumque.”

A “scientia rerum divinarum” is a science of Religion.

To come to the Scholastics, in consonance with these teachings of the ancients, they universally held as a prime notion that theology, or the knowledge of God, ranks as a science. Thus we find St. Thomas places the thesis in the very beginning of his great work the *Summa Theologica*:—

“Sacra doctrina est scientia ex principiis superioris scientiæ quæ Dei et beatorum propria est revelata.”<sup>2</sup>

Innumerable are the passages on the cognoscibility of God in the same author, and his doctrine no one will call in question as expository of the body of Scholastic thought. We find him posit the thesis that the knowledge of God is the supreme end and aim of all intellectual life:—

“Quod intelligere Deum est finis omnis intellectualis substantiæ.”<sup>3</sup>

It is needless to add that modern Catholic philosophy has undergone no alteration on this important point. Numberless, in fact the whole host of Catholic writers might be quoted. One or two references will suffice. The most recent Catholic Psychology published, which has a universal reputation among the English-speaking peoples, states that the “existence and the attributes” of God are demonstrated by strict logical reasoning and can, therefore, “be *known* as well as *believed*.”<sup>4</sup>

The same doctrine is admirably expressed in the following concise formula by the Very Rev. Dr. Hewett, in his exposition of the

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, Book xi, ch. vi, p. 326, seqq.

<sup>2</sup> I, q. 1, a. 1, c. Cf. *in Sent.* iii, dist. 53, *quaest.* 1, art. 2, *quaestione* iv.

<sup>3</sup> S. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, 1-2, q. 1, a. 7, and 1, q. 12, a. 4, and *Cont. gen.*, lib. 1, cap. 25.

<sup>4</sup> M. Maher, S. J., *op. cit.*, p. 317.



Catholic philosophy at the recent Parliament of Religions. He states that :—

“All that we *know* of God by pure reason is summed up by Aristotle in the metaphysical formula that God is pure and perfect act, logically and ontologically the first principle of all that becomes by a transition from potential into actual being.”<sup>1</sup>

But it is unnecessary to single out the strictly Catholic teaching. On no existing subject is there such a universal philosophic *consensus*. Bacon agrees with St. Thomas in dividing the sciences into philosophy and *supernatural* theology, thus making revealed Religion a branch of scientific study. So high does he exalt it that he calls it :—

“The fruit and sabbath of all human contemplations.”

And a little lower on the page he writes :—

“Philosophy has three objects ; viz., God, nature and man.”<sup>2</sup>

Descartes emphasizes the same doctrine with still more vigor, if that be possible. Not only does he affirm that God is knowable, but, according to his celebrated theory he derives other cognitions from the intellection of the Deity as from their source. For this reason he heads the thirteenth of the *Principles of Human Knowledge* in this wise :

“In what sense the knowledge of other things depends upon the knowledge of God.”<sup>3</sup>

Locke tells us that we have a “demonstrative” “knowledge” of “God’s” existence.<sup>4</sup> Hegel proclaims “the immediate knowledge of God,” and terms Religion “immediate knowledge ;”<sup>5</sup> Principal

<sup>1</sup> *Rational Demonstration of the being of God*, Neely, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> *Novum Organum, Advancement of Learning*, Book iii, ch. 1, p. 116, *op. cit.* Cf. *Ibid.*, ch. ii, p. 120.—Conf. Dante, *Hell*, Canto ii, vv. 70–75, Cary’s translation, new ed., New York. Note.—In this passage Beatrice is invested with the character of *celestial wisdom* or *supernatural theology*, so high is Dante’s idea of the human knowledge of God.

<sup>3</sup> *The Principles of Philosophy*, in *op. cit.*, p. 198.

<sup>4</sup> *op. cit.*, Book iv, c. 3, sect. xxi, p. 450.

<sup>5</sup> *op. cit.*, pp. 130, 123 and *passim*.

Caird has written a very valuable book on the *Philosophy of Religion*; and, finally, we find a very emphatic consent of the English-speaking mind at the Parliament of Religions, on the knowableness of God and the scientific character of Religion. As illustrations of the spirit of this consent, we find Dr. Landis entitle his Essay: *How can Philosophy aid the Science of Religion*; <sup>1</sup> we find the aged Sir William Dawson, in his Paper on *The Religion of Science*, teach the cogitability of the First Cause in his "qualities;" <sup>2</sup> we find Bishop Keane, in his preliminary remarks introductory to the reading of *Cardinal Gibbons' Message*, speak of the "divine philosophy of religion . . . enlightening man." <sup>3</sup> We, therefore, may safely conclude that apart from the Agnostic philosophy, Religion is a branch of Knowledge, a branch of Science and a branch of Philosophy, and that it is not Nescience no more than any of these three. We may also safely conclude that, as Mr. Spencer's Agnosticism is the only religious form of that philosophy, it stands alone and isolated among the Religions, in the affirmation that Religion is not Knowledge but Nescience. For this reason, as Mr. Spencer has presented no proof for his singular antithesis of Religion and Science, this flaw in his theory of *Religion and Science*, of itself alone, breaks that theory in pieces. In pursuing the criticism we should be more at ease if Mr. Spencer had proffered a proof. Its most seemingly improbable absence must impress the reader that perhaps we are prejudiced. However, we must asseverate that there is no proof on the part of Mr. Spencer.

§ 20.—*Religion is not Mere Theory.—Testimony of all Creeds.*

Mr. Spencer defines Religion "as a theory of original causation." <sup>4</sup> He informs us in the same sentence that "the accompanying moral code" is "a supplementary growth." A little lower down he states that "even positive Atheism comes within the definition; for it, too, in asserting the self-existence of Space, Matter and Motion, which it regards as adequate causes of every appearance, propounds an *à priori* theory from which it holds the facts to be deducible." The essence of Religion, therefore, according to our author, consists

<sup>1</sup> Neely, *op. cit.*, p. 432.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 419.

<sup>3</sup> Neely, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

<sup>4</sup> *First Principles*, § 14, p. 43.

in mere theory—"a theory of original causation"—the practical part of it is a mere super-addition, a simple supplement.

It is news to us, and no doubt to the world at large it is equally so, that Atheism is a kind of Religion. The assertion, however, may hold good if Religion be a theory of original causation. But Mr. Spencer according to his custom has neglected to proffer a proof for this singular statement. We might apply in this and in the other frequent unproved assertions of Mr. Spencer, the worn adage of the Schools, viz., what is gratuitously asserted, may likewise be gratuitously denied. Still we will add our reasons. Were we to concede to Mr. Spencer that Religion is enclosed in the mere theoretic order, his definition does not cover the whole ground. If Atheism be admitted into the kingdom of Religion, the *Religion of Humanity* cannot well be excluded. M. Comte and Mr. Harrison, however, deny every theory of causation.<sup>1</sup> What is far more important, Mr. Spencer will be obliged to shut out Buddhism and its five hundred millions of Religionists from the category and name of Religion. Buddhism admits the law of cause and effect, but denies all theory of *original* causation. There is no First Cause, says Buddha, for "there is no cause which is not an effect."<sup>2</sup>

Religion is not "a theory of original causation;" equally inadmissible is the statement that the essential characters of Religion are a mere "supplementary growth."

Were the "moral code" a simply supplementary growth, we should be able both to find religions existing, at some period of their history, without a moral code; and we should find religious creeds in general attach a greater importance to the theory than to the practice. But all is the contrary. In beholding the religions of the universe not mere theory but practice strikes us everywhere. The doctrine of love,<sup>3</sup> sacrifice, prayer is preached in Vedic Hinduism.<sup>4</sup> Gautama summed up his teaching in the verse:—

<sup>1</sup> Frederick Harrison, *Agnostic Metaphysics in The Insuppressible Book*, by Gail Hamilton, p. 122, Boston, 1885.

<sup>2</sup> Shaku Soyen, of Japan, *The Law of Cause and Effect as Taught by Buddha*, in Neely, *op. cit.*, p. 379.

<sup>3</sup> Swami Vivekananda, of India, *Hinduism as a Religion*, Neely, *op. cit.*, p. 441.

<sup>4</sup> Max Müller, *Theosophy or Psychological Religion, The Gifford Lectures*, 1892, p. 22, London, 1893.



"To cease from sin,  
To get virtue,  
To cleanse the heart,  
That is the Religion of the Buddhas."<sup>1</sup>

Repentance and a good life are at the core of the Confucian creed. Confucius remarks of the Book of Changes (Yih King) that :—

"Those who multiply good deeds will have joys to overflowing; those who multiply evil deeds will have calamities running over."<sup>2</sup>

The Pelasgians and the ancient Germans worshipped God when they had no name to express him.<sup>3</sup> Because of its dreaded sanctity, Jehovah, the ineffable name of the Supreme Being was not pronounced by the Jews. The Egyptians never uttered the name of the God Osiris so awful their veneration. Sculptor and scribe spelled it backwards, *i. e.*, instead of "As-ari" they wrote it "Ari-as."<sup>4</sup> Before Mahomet, the Islamite worshipped the stars of Lot and Ozza and Manah and the three hundred and sixty idols in the temple of Mecca.<sup>5</sup> In the religion of Mahomet, fasting and prayer and alms are among the essentials,<sup>6</sup> the Koran is a book of religious practices. The aboriginal North American Indians, from Alaska to Mexico, believed in religious ceremonies and practiced propitiatory self-torture.<sup>7</sup> In Zoroastrianism, which was the state religion of ancient Persia, the Parsee worships fire as the symbol of the purity and effulgence of God.<sup>8</sup> The Pharaoh, like the Jewish high priest, alone entered the Holy of Holies (Adytum) to present the oblations of his people. They had the temple processions, the carrying of shrines and symbols of Gods. Before the Pharaoh entered upon a warlike expedition, the image of the warlike deity "was carried in a shrine, at the head of a grand procession of priests and adherents of the

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Alfred W. Momerie, of England, *The Essentials of Religion*, Neely, *op. cit.*, p. 626.

<sup>2</sup> Kung Hsien Ho, Shanghai, Confucianism, Neely, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. Maurice Phillips of Madras, *The Ancient Religion of India*, Neely, p. 101.

<sup>4</sup> J. A. S. Grant, (Bey) of Cairo, Egypt, *The Ancient Egyptian Religion*, Neely, p. 265.

<sup>5</sup> George Washburn, D. D., of Constantinople, *Christianity and Mohammedanism*, Neely, p. 236. Conf. Max Müller, *Theosophy or Psychological Religion*, p. 21, *ed. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>7</sup> Alice C. Fletcher, *Religion of the North American Indians*, Neely, p. 586.

<sup>8</sup> Jijanjani Jamshodji Modi, *Religious System of the Parsees*, Neely, p. 178.



temple, and the people bowed the head as it passed and sent up a prayer for blessing on the campaign."<sup>1</sup>

In a word, looking back upon the historic past, we find not a single race of men, in all the cycles of human history, who for a single moment held the theoretical separate from the practical in Religion. To this testify the dark Egyptian temples with the approaches through the long rows of sphinxes, the solemn Roman and the earth-loving Greek temples, the temple of the Juggernaut in India, and the other Brahmanic and the numerous Buddhistic houses of worship; the Solomonic temple and the town temples of ancient Assyria and Babylon, the Keltic altars and the mosques and minarets of Western Asia. In all these perennial monuments, as well as in the jungle and on the mountain top, and wherever human foot has trod, we behold men "lifting up holy hands of aspiration and petition to the divine. Sounding through Greek hymns and Babylonian psalms alike are heard human voices crying after the Eternal."<sup>2</sup>

These and similar testimonies, which could fill volumes, not only illustrate and corroborate the connection between the theoretical and practical features of the religious concept, but they also abundantly serve to exemplify that *practice* equally well with theory belongs to the essentials of Religion. Let any man conceive a religion of mere theory and he at once conceives the foremost of all shams; he finds it just as satisfactory to the needs of his higher nature, as a mere theory of labor would be to appease the cravings of his body for meat and drink.

Mr. Spencer's mistake lies in this, that because the mind must be conscious of the object of Religion before it worships and serves, therefore this intellectual element is not simply the first but the essential constituent, and the *cultus* which follows is not simply a posterior but a secondary or supplementary growth. But he might be corrected of this error if he animadverted that all the great teachers who have written on the theory of Religion, have categorized their speculations as fitting into philosophy or metaphysics without even the dream of denominating them Religion. Aristotle's

<sup>1</sup> J. A. S. Grant (Bey) of Cairo, Egypt, *The Ancient Egyptian Religion*, Neely, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

<sup>2</sup> C. S. Goodspeed, *What the Dead Religions have bequeathed*, Neely, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

Metaphysics, Plato's Philosophy (vols. V and VI), Descartes and Bacon's philosophical works, all treat of the divine Being and the origin of things, or, as Mr. Spencer would express it, they treat of "original causation." But this they consider metaphysics not Religion. Innumerable other authors might be cited. These Mr. Spencer will not, nor can he afford to despise. Their names, which are voices from a cloud of witnesses, must stand authoritative that theory is not the synonym of Religion, that the metaphysic of Religion and Religion itself are not identical.

But to come to more direct evidence.—Strip Buddhism of its *Nirvāna* or extinction,<sup>1</sup> and what remains of it? Nothing but the shell. But the Nirvāna is not theory but practice, practice of a very sweeping kind. The same we find in Hinduism. Listen to the Brahmo-Somaj monk, Swami Vivekananda :—

"The whole religion of the Hindu is centered in realization. Man is to become divine, realizing the divine."<sup>2</sup>

"In our Confucian Religion," says Kung Hsien Ho, of Shanghai, "the most important thing is to follow the will of heaven."<sup>3</sup> And again on the same page—"The Chung Yang calls the practice of wisdom, Religion."

The same is the spirit of Judaism, as seen in the Pirke Avoth—"The practical application, not theory is the essential," said Simon.—"Deed first, then Creed,"<sup>4</sup> added Abtalion. How could it be otherwise in a religion whose essence is the Ten Commandments written by the finger of God on the Tables of Stone?

And in Christianity the divine Saviour says of the love of God and the love of our neighbor, that :—

"On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets."<sup>5</sup>

In this sense Cardinal Gibbons introduces the Apostle's definition :—

<sup>1</sup> Müller, *Science of Religion*, Buddhist Nihilism, p. 141, New York, 1893.

<sup>2</sup> *Hinduism as a Religion*, Neely, *op. cit.*, p. 443. Note.—The Italics are mine.

<sup>3</sup> *Confucianism*, Neely, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

<sup>4</sup> Rabbi H. Peirira Mendes, *Orthodox or Historical Judaism*, Neely, p. 214.

<sup>5</sup> *Matt.*, ch. xxii, v. 40.

"Religion pure and undefiled before God and the Father, is this; to visit the fatherless and the widow in their tribulation, and to keep oneself unspotted from this world."<sup>1</sup>

Well then has Mr. Harrison said in his article entitled *The Ghost of Religion* in reply to Mr. Spencer's *Religion; a Retrospect and Prospect*:—

"To me it is rather the Ghost of Religion."<sup>2</sup>

And he adds the reason a little further on as he speaks of his opponent's merely theoretic concept:—

"In any reasonable use of language religion implies some kind of belief in a Power outside ourselves, some kind of awe and gratitude felt for that Power, some kind of influence exerted by it over our lives."<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Harrison repeats with great force the same line of reasoning in his second reply *Agnostic Metaphysics* to Mr. Spencer's counter-attack *Retrogressive Religion*.<sup>4</sup>

If we turn from Mr. Spencer's opponent to one of Mr. Spencer's most ardent disciples, we find him unwittingly agree with Mr. Harrison and the rest of the world on this point. Mr. Richard Bithell believes in the Unknowable: he believes the philosophy of the Unknowable is a theory of original causation. Yet he does not believe it Religion. He believes no Agnosticism is. He says:—

"As a matter of fact, Agnosticism has much less to do with religious beliefs than is commonly supposed. It is a system of philosophy not a theory of religion."<sup>5</sup>

This is further than we have wished to go; Agnosticism the theory of original causation is philosophy, but it is not even the theory of religion!

Prof. Huxley voices the same opinion almost identically:—

"Neither *per se* nor *per aliud* has agnosticism (if I know anything about it) the least pretension to be a religious philosophy."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Religion characteristic of Humanity*, Neely, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> Gail, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95, and *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Bithell, B. Sc., Ph. D., *Agnostic Problems*, Preface, p. vi, London, Edinburgh, 1887.

<sup>6</sup> T. H. Huxley, *Science and Christian Tradition*, *Essays, Agnosticism*, p. 248, edit. quoted.

Finally we may listen to *the* eminent English authority :—

“There is no religion—or if there is, I do not know it—which does not say, ‘Do good, avoid evil.’ There is none which does not contain what Rabbi Hillel called the *quintessence* of all religions, the simple warning, ‘Be good, my boy.’ ‘Be good, my boy,’ may seem a very short catechism; but let us add to it, ‘Be good, my boy, for God’s sake,’ and we have in it very nearly the whole of the Law and the Prophets.”<sup>1</sup>

We may safely, therefore, conclude that Mr. Spencer’s proposal to put the quintessence of Religion in a mere philosophic theory making the practice but a succrescence, is condemned to the doom of the religion of the philosophers of the last century, of whom Max Müller very forcibly says :—

“They soon found that a mere philosophical system, however true, can never take the place of religious faith.”<sup>2</sup>

§ 21.—*The Unknowable is not the Object of Religion.*  
*Sir W. Hamilton’s Authorities.*

Mr. Spencer proceeds to state that :—

“The Power which the Universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable” (§ 14, p. 46).

And that all creeds are agreed on this point, however much they may differ in their special dogmas: that every thinker of note has subscribed to the conclusion, viz., that :—

“The reality existing behind all appearances is, and must ever be unknown” (§ 22, p. 69).

Every thinker of note, we are informed, has subscribed to this conclusion. We shall examine the statement of the alleged subscription on the part of all the philosophers of eminence. Mr. Spencer’s words immediately subsequent to the quotation are :—

“‘With the exception,’ says Sir William Hamilton, ‘of a few late Absolutist theorists in Germany, this is, perhaps, the truth of all others most harmoniously re-echoed by every philosopher of every school.’ And among these he names Protagoras, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Boethius, Averroes, Albertus Magnus, Gerson, Leo Hebraeus, Melancthon, Scaliger, Francis Piccolomini, Giordano Bruno, Campanella, Bacon, Spinoza, Newton, Kant” (§ 22, p. 69).

<sup>1</sup> Max Müller, *Fourth Lecture, Science of Religion*, pp. 108–9, ed. cit.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, *Second Lecture*, p. 43.



Before discussing the merits of this quotation, we must premise that Mr. Spencer designates the doctrine in question, viz., the unknowableness of the reality existing behind all appearances as *Relativism*. The term with him embraces two concepts, first the inscrutability of the First Cause, secondly, the consequent restriction of all cognition to the *phenomenal* or relative. Now to the assertion adduced.

This assertion is made on the authority of Sir W. Hamilton, who bases it on certain passages from the works of the philosophers named in the quotation. The testimonies adduced are found in the work, *Discussions on Philosophy and Literature, Appendix I, Philosophical*, Book II, *Testimonies to the more special fact that all our knowledge whether of Mind or Matter is only phenomenal*, pp. 597 sqq., New York, 1860.

Sir W. Hamilton may be met with weapons taken from his own camp. Mr. Mill is an ardent support of the theory of Relativity of Knowledge : here is his verdict on Sir William's testimonies :—

"He (Sir W. Hamilton) supports his assertions by quotations from seventeen thinkers of eminence, beginning with Protagoras and Aristotle, and ending with Kant. Gladly, however, as I should learn that a philosophical truth, destructive of so great a mass of baseless and misleading speculations, had been universally recognized by philosophers of all past times, and that Ontology, instead of being, as I believed, the oldest form of philosophy, was a recent invention of Schelling and Hegel, I am obliged to confess that none of the passages, except the one from the Elder Scaliger, and the one from Newton, convey to my mind that the writers had ever come in sight of the great truth he supposes them to have intended to express. Almost all of them seem to be perfectly compatible with the rejection of it."<sup>1</sup>

Not only does Mr. Mill consider that the Scotch metaphysician misinterprets his authorities, but even he goes so far as to affirm that Sir W. Hamilton himself did not hold the Relativity philosophy in more than a nominal sense. Mr. Mills' reasons to this effect are so cogent that they force from Mr. Spencer the confession that the quotations adduced by Mr. Mill in his *Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy*, justify the assertion that the doctrine was espoused by him only in the name.<sup>2</sup> These *Essays* appeared

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Mill, *An Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy*, p. 182, New York, 1884.

<sup>2</sup> *Essays Scientific, Political and Speculative*, vol. ii.; *Essay, Mill versus Hamilton, the Test of Truth*, p. 384, stereotyped edit., London, 1868-74. Note.—The First Edition of *First Principles* appeared in 1860.

eight years after the "First Principles." So we must consider Mr. Spencer's avowal an *ex professo* retraction of his teachings in the "First Principles," concerning Sir W. Hamilton's Relativism. In the light of this fact any further examination of the passages in question must seem superfluous. However, a cursory glance may not be out of place.

Sir W. Hamilton quotes from Aristotle (*Metaphysics*, Book VII, chap. X). There is no chapter tenth in Book seventh. He cites same work (Book XII, chap. IX). Chapter ninth exists, but the passage is not there. The next extract (Book XII, chap. VII) does exist, but it is irrelevant. The Stagyrte in this Book and especially throughout this entire chapter, combats the Pythagorean principle of the "Incommensurability of Monads." He does not even suggest the slightest allusion to the theory of Relativity. In fact not only not here but nowhere in his "Metaphysics" does he discuss the Phenomenality of Knowledge. His views on the matter, however, may be readily read in his teachings. He tells us that substances are made cognizable by the senses, in the signification that through the instrumentality of sense cognition of the sensible qualities, they are presented and made intelligible to the intellect.<sup>1</sup> He scoffs at the *dictum* of Protagoras—which Sir W. Hamilton adduces among the quotations we are discussing as *clean* and *pure* Relativism—that:—

"Man is for himself the measure of all things."

We will give his answer to Protagoras:—

"For, likewise he (Protagoras) said that man is a measure for all things—in this way affirming nothing else than what appeared to every man, that this, also, indubitably is that which it appears to be. If, however, this is admitted, the same thing will happen to be and not to be, and to be both evil and good."<sup>2</sup>

Sir W. Hamilton has the happy faculty of producing two men, one of whom refutes the opinion of the other, and in the face of all this, to tell us not to mind, that they both agree.

Bacon is another of the philosophers adduced. We give the text:—

"Informatio sensus semper est ex analogia hominis, non ex analogia universi; atque magno prorsus errore asseritur sensum esse mensuram rerum" (*Instauratio Magna, distr. op.*, vol. i, p. 218).

<sup>1</sup> Book vii, chap. i, p. 212, ed. cit.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Book x, ch. vi, p. 291.

The writer treats in this part of Induction as the true method of seeking Science. This induction, he thinks, must proceed by experiment, and experiment requires the use of the senses. The senses are defective and at times fallacious, he urges. Then follow the words above, viz. :—

“The testimony and information derived from the senses have reference to man and not to the universe. And it is a great error to assert that the senses are the measure of all things.”

The testimony of the senses has “reference to man and not to the universe.” They communicate to man the five special forms of knowledge to which they are limited. The mode of communication of this knowledge depends on the nature of the sense. A luminous object is perceived by the eye, because it is luminous : an audible object by the ear, because it is audible. The object might have myriad other forms and properties ; the eye is concerned solely with its luminousness ; the ear solely with its audibleness. The testimony of the senses, then, has reference especially and primarily to the peculiar nature of each separate sense, and after this to the object. But the senses being cognoscitive faculties of *man*, it can be truly said that the testimony of the senses has reference to man *rather than* to the universe, which is the meaning of the words of Bacon. The senses are not “the measure of all things.” This is an easy corollary of the previous principle. For if the senses are confined to the five forms of testimony peculiar to them, their perception does not embrace or measure all cognition.

To sum up in a sentence : the senses are bearers of the circumscribed modes of cognition which are proper of human nature or of man, and as they are circumscribed cognitions, they do not measure all manners of knowledge, they are not “the measure of all things.” This explanation makes it manifest that it is the scope and aim of the great English admirer of induction, to warn his enthusiastic followers from an overbounded confidence in it as the method of science. He tells them, do not think that the senses are the witnesses of all science : they are the reporters of that science which sensible observation gives to man ; you will make a very great mistake if you fancy that they are the rule and measure of all things. It would be impossible to apply this saying



of the Philosopher of Induction in a Relativist sense. It could not fit in. Besides, Bacon nowhere speaks in this part, of the nature or limitations of human knowledge; he confines himself to sketching a scheme of the whole treatise. That is why it is called *Distributio Operis*. When he does speak, however, of the non-realistic doctrines, his denunciation is cast in clear and by no means equivocal language.<sup>1</sup>

Next comes St. Augustine:—

“Ab utroque notitia paritur, a cognoscente et cognito” (*de Trin.*, L. ix, cc. i, 2).

Namely:—

“Cognition is begotten by both the cognizing subject and the cognized object.”

This is a time-honored dictum of the Schoolmen. It simply signifies that the object of knowledge impresses itself on the knowing faculty so that, in virtue of the impress, the mind brings forth the act of knowledge. What has this to do with the incomprehensibility of the First Cause? how is this phenomenalism or, in Mr. Spencer's language, relativism? The citator, I suppose, means that a subject and object of knowledge are spoken of, and that these being relative terms connote a relative knowledge. Let us clear this confusion: the cognoscitive subject and cognoscitive object are relative terms in the plain simple sense that the subject is related to the object in so far as it knows the object; conversely that the object is related to the subject in so far as it is known by the subject. If this be relativism every realist is as genuine a relativist as Sir W. Hamilton. But it is not a question of logomachies; relativism in the present discussion imports a knowledge of phenomena and naught besides. Had Sir W. Hamilton taken a cursory glance at the two chapters in question, he must have found that St. Augustine deals in the first chapter with the attitude of mind we should have towards the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. The saint says explicitly that that truth is not intelligible to us in our present existence, and must be an object of belief, as it is a mystery. But in the future life, he continues, it shall be manifest to us, for then we shall see God face to face; that is, we shall know Him most

<sup>1</sup> *Novum Organum*, Preface, *op. cit.*, p. 380.



perfectly. This does not look much like relativism; in fact, even Sir W. Hamilton will admit that it is its very antithesis. In the second chapter quoted the saintly author speaks on divine love; in neither chapter does he even hint or make the slightest allusion to the relativist tenets.

Other excerpts from St. Augustine are adduced by Sir W. Hamilton, but they are even less relevant than the reference we have just discussed.

Boethius is quoted:—

“Omne quod cognoscitur, non secundum sui vim, sed secundum cognoscentium potius comprehenditur facultatum” (*De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, L. v, prosa iv).

In this place the author of the *De Consolatione* expounds the doctrine of the reconciliation between Divine Providence and Human Liberty. He says the divine foreknowledge of free future events by no means impairs the liberty of the human will from which those events proceed. He puts himself the objection: if those events are foreknown, must they therefore necessarily happen? And he answers it by saying: they would, and would be devoid of all liberty, if the faculty perceiving them depended on them as the cause determinative of cognition, and not rather on its own intrinsic power of understanding all that is intelligible, by the sole fact that it has got the virtue in itself of understanding all things. Those who assert, he continues, that divine foreknowledge is subversive of human liberty, are beguiled by the mistake that in those things which each knows he depends solely on the power and nature of the objects known, which is entirely a mistake. He then subjoins the sentence quoted by Sir W. Hamilton, viz., that “whatever is known is understood, not according to its own virtue, but rather according to the virtue of the comprehending faculties.” He adds several illustrations. For instance, the roundness of bodies is an object of perception by sight and an object of perception by touch. The cognition acquired by the eye is totally different from that acquired by the hand. What is the cause of the difference? It is not the object, that is the same in both cases; it is the perceiving faculty. Hence, knowledge depends not so much on the object, but rather on the cognoscitive faculty. This is the meaning and view of the dictum of Boethius.

The following passages are also summoned to do battle for Relativism :—

“Mens humana per accidentia cognoscit substantiam” (Melancthon, *Erotemata, Dialectices*, L. i., Pr. *Substantia*).

“Mens intelligit se non per se primo, sed cum cætera intellexerit, ut dicitur in L. iii, *de Anima*, t. 8, et in L. xii, *Metaph.*, t. 38” (Francis Piccolomini, *De Mente humana*, L. i, c. 8).

“Intellectus non intelligit seipsum nisi per accidens fiat intelligibilis; ut materia cognoscitur per aliquid cujus ipsa est fundamentum” (Albertus Magnus, *contra Averroem. de Unitate Intellectus*, c. 7).

“Mens humana ipsum corpus non cognoscit, nec ipsum existere scit, nisi per ideas affectionum, quibus corpus afficitur” (Spinoza, *Ethices*, pars. ii, prop. xix).

These four places and others which might be given from the authors named by Sir W. Hamilton, all propound the same teaching; and a literal translation of them may be put in these words :—“The human mind understands neither itself nor material substances except in so far as itself and material substances are disclosed to it by the qualities with which they are affected.” This is almost a verbal rendering, and it certainly gives the true and very substance of the doctrine. Each of the authors alleged affirms distinctly that the human mind *knows* itself, *understands* itself; *knows, understands substances, material things*. Relativism declares that the human mind does *not know* itself, does *not know* substances, material things. These philosophers take it for granted that mind and matter are cognizable: the burden of their argument is, *how* does the mind cognize itself, *how* does it cognize substance. Relativism shuts this controversy out of court, and logically. For, as it denies the cognoscibility of anything but phenomena, the question *how* things in themselves are apprehensible, becomes with it a chimera.

We will not burden the reader with any further consideration of this question. Sir W. Hamilton himself does not seem to know his own mind on the “Relativity of Knowledge.” Mr. J. S. Mill affirms that he (Sir W. Hamilton) never held it in more than a nominal sense. Mr. Spencer even admits that Mr. Mill has demonstrated conclusively that Sir William misinterpreted the authors he adduces. These facts, taken together with Sir W. Hamilton’s reckless misquotation of some passages, and his total misunderstanding of them all, makes his argument seem more like a fantastical sham battle than a serious effort to demonstrate his cause.

§ 22.—*The Unknowable is not the Object of Religion.*  
*The History of the Religions.*

To pass from Sir W. Hamilton's authorities to the statement that all Religions are at one in the admission of the Unknowableness of the First Cause, and that this verity is the "essential constituent" of all the creeds, we shall, I think, find that this statement is likewise utterly bereft of any historical value. We have historically demonstrated that knowledge enters into the essential elements of Religion, and by the very fact that not *unknowableness* but *knowableness* is the "essential constituent" of all the creeds. We have likewise historically demonstrated that action as well as theory constitute the essence of Religion; this is equivalent to the demonstration that not the unknowableness of the First Cause, which is an assertion of strictly theoretical value, but something of a more complex character make up the essential constitutive of the religious concept. But as Mr. Spencer appeals directly to the creeds, for a short time to the creeds let us go with him.

The question at issue, therefore, is:—are all religions perfectly at one in the tacit conviction that "the existence of the world with all it contains and all which surrounds it is a mystery ever pressing for interpretation?" (§ 14, p. 43). Mr. Spencer affirms they are, and begins by telling us not what the different religious systems say of themselves, but what he thinks they mean. We should fancy that from such a mighty array of witnesses a few might be permitted to speak for themselves, without the need of interpreter. However, Mr. Spencer *does* allow the monotheistic faiths to speak their case. We will first examine his interpretation of the other alleged beliefs. We cite his argument as it stands:—

"Be it in the primitive Ghost-theory which assumes a human personality behind each unusual phenomenon; be it in Polytheism, in which these personalities are partially generalized; or be it in Monotheism, in which they are wholly generalized; or be it in Pantheism, in which the generalized personality becomes one with the phenomena; we equally find an hypothesis which is supposed to render the Universe comprehensible" (p. 43).

In this passage Mr. Spencer expounds his theory of the historical Evolution of Religion originating in the primitive Ghost-theory. This theory he has attempted to substantiate in his article, *Religion*:



a *Retrospect and Prospect*.<sup>1</sup> Here he assumes it. It is quite irrelevant to our question whether it be true or no. We have solely to concern ourselves whether there be or not an historical religious consensus on the dogma of the unknowableness of the Primal Cause, as the "essential constituent" of each and every Religion. If the Ghost-theory were the truth, it would simply show, in so far as relates to us, that belief in a Personal God was not the religion of the *primitive* race and that man has had to struggle through error to attain to it. Whereas, in Mr. Spencer's case, it makes a strong argument against him, for it would show that by a necessary process of physical evolution, the existing Religion of the Unknowable has unfolded itself from a primal nebula of religious error into its present purity and perfection. In our case the Ghost-theory would be a mere uninfluencing accident, in Mr. Spencer's it would be the life germ—or death germ—of error from which the full flower of truth by the necessary laws of physical causation has been evolved.

On this secondary matter—secondary in this place—we shall simply state in passing that Mr. Spencer bases his opinion both in the volume we are examining and in his *Sociology*, vol. I., as well as in the article quoted above, on mere philosophic proofs ignoring the fulcrum of historical support. To put it in the words of an eminent French authority, he has utterly ignored the utilities of philological research.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand in forty-five pages<sup>3</sup> packed with the heaviest philological evidence, Max Müller has demonstrated, beyond the pale of reasonable suspicion, that in all cases whether among the Aryan, the Semitic or the Turanian races—and these are the three great root-Religions of the world—the belief in a God or Gods preceded the belief in departed spirits and that to use his words:—

"The worship of the spirits of the departed is perhaps the most widely spread form of natural superstition all over the world."<sup>4</sup>

We will now examine Mr. Spencer's argument. In the different forms of Religion, the Ghost-theory, Polytheism, Monotheism,

<sup>1</sup> Gail, *op. cit.*, pp. 1, sqq.

<sup>2</sup> Albert Réville, *La nouvelle Théorie Euhémériste M. Herbert Spencer*, *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, tom. iv, 1881.

<sup>3</sup> *Science of Religion, Third Lecture, op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.



Pantheism, we find "an hypothesis which is supposed to render the Universe comprehensible." This is the base of the argumentation. The conclusion he derives is: therefore the world is "a mystery ever pressing for interpretation," in other words it is incomprehensible. We think the opposite conclusion is the right one. If the various Religions advance "an hypothesis which is supposed to render the Universe comprehensible," then the Religions are agreed that the Universe is not incomprehensible, but comprehensible, is not a mystery but a solved problem.

Mr. Spencer pursues his argumentation:—

"Now every theory tacitly asserts two things: firstly that there is something to be explained; secondly that such and such is the explanation. Hence however widely different speculators may disagree in the solutions they give of the same problem; yet by implication they agree that there is a problem to be solved. Here then is an element which all creeds have in common" (p. 44).

This common element is that the world is, "a mystery ever pressing for interpretation" (*Ibid.*).

We concur with the writer that every theory asserts that there is something to be explained, not in the sense that it is *unexplainable*. For if this were so, the theory would not offer an explanation, it would not attempt to explain what it considered unexplainable. But in the sense that there is something which is *proposed for explanation*—we concur with the writer that every theory asserts "that such and such is the explanation," viz., that what is proposed for explanation is *explainable*. Hence they agree not as Mr. Spencer would have it "that there is a problem to be solved," but that the *problem is solved*. Wherefore, the common element in the case of Religion is not that the world is a mystery ever pressing for interpretation, *i. e.*, is *unexplainable*, but that the world is *explainable* and explained. This argument is so simple it may be misunderstood. We will indicate the headings: 1. Every theory asserts that there is something *to be explained*, *i. e.*, that there is something *proposed for explanation*; 2. Every theory asserts that *such and such is the explanation*, *i. e.*, that what is proposed for explanation is *explainable*; 3. Therefore the different religious theories are agreed that the world is not *unexplainable* but *explainable*, not a *mystery* but an *explained fact*.

Thus far Mr. Spencer's argument is directly against himself. His next form of proof is a collection of quotations. He informs

his readers that we yet see altars "to the unknown and unknowable God" (p. 45). We know of no altars now existing "to the unknown and unknowable God." We cannot even imagine them. Mr. Spencer does not say where they are. We suppose the quotation marks marking the phrase, to the unknown and unknowable God, have reference to the altar which St. Paul saw at Athens, on which was written: "To the unknown God."<sup>1</sup> If that is the case, and the reference cannot be to anything else, the quotation is incorrect. It should be, not "to the unknown and unknowable God," but "to the unknown God," which makes a great difference. Moreover, the Athenians did not mean that the God in question was unknown to everyone, but unknown *to them*, for they referred to the God of the Christians. Again the citation turns with great wrath on Mr. Spencer. They had but one altar "to the unknown God;" by the very fact they implied that they knew all the other Gods. St. Paul did not look on the unknown God as unknown to him; as he stands in the Areopagus he tells who this unknown God is, and he accuses his hearers of superstition for erecting an altar to the unknown:—

"Ye men of Athens," he said in the passage cited, "I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious. For passing by and seeing your idols, I found an altar on which was written: To the unknown God. What, therefore, you worship without knowing it, that I preach to you."

Mr. Spencer goes on:—

"In the worship of a God that cannot by any searching be found out there is a clearer recognition of the inscrutableness of creation" (*Ibid.*).

We cannot understand to what living creed this passage refers. He adds:—

"Further developments of theology ending in such assertions as that 'a God understood would be no God at all,' and 'to think that God is, as we can think him to be, is blasphemy,' exhibit this recognition still more distinctly; and it pervades all the cultivated theology of the present day."

Mr. Spencer does not name his authorities; we are at a loss to know who they are, what their weight is, and what they mean.

<sup>1</sup>*Acts of the Apostles*, ch. xvii, vv. 22, 23.

Still, we may safely say that no scientific theologian, if such used any of the phrases adduced, used them in Mr. Spencer's interpretation. The phrase "a God understood would be no God at all" is theologically and scripturally correct, if the word "understood" be taken, as it may be, to mean "perfectly known." But in this signification it proves nothing for Mr. Spencer. No one holds that God is perfectly known. But we would like Mr. Spencer to show us any scriptural or theological authority who asserts that God cannot be *imperfectly known*. Mr. Spencer's failure to do this must be accounted a surrender of his argument.

The other assertion that "to think that God is, as we can think him to be, is blasphemy," is another loose phrase which may mean anything, though no doubt used by the writer of it orthodoxically. We can conceive God anthropomorphically; that is, we can picture Him in the imagination as if He acted in human fashion. In this way, the Book of Genesis, in describing how God formed the first man from the slime of the earth, says that He "breathed into his face the breath of life." Likewise, it states that "the Spirit of God moved over the waters." It is unnecessary to add that when we conceive God in this way the conception is purely metaphoric and does not represent God as He is. But can we not also conceive God as the Ultimate Cause? and does not this concept present Him as He is? Mr. Spencer will not deny this without being hoist in his own petard, for so he conceives the Unknowable. Similarly we can apprehend God as self-existent, intelligent, personal, free, loving, happy, immortal; at least the Scriptures and Theology teach us so. Hence it does not seem that Mr. Spencer has proved his point. Contrariwise, his inability to bring forward even a single Religion admitting the unknowableness of the Deity, turns into a very forcible argument that, not only there is not perfect religious unanimity in the profession of the Unknowable as the essential constituent of Religion, but that there is a perfect unanimity on one point at least, *i. e.*, that an Unknowable God is not the essential constituent of Religion.

The creeds have been introduced by Mr. Spencer to support his religious theory. Their voices have been silent in his regard. It is our duty to see if they be silent when appealed to against him. No one will deny that Christianity, Judaism and Mohammedanism are monotheistic beliefs and admit an extra-kosmic Personal Creator.



Similarly the Parsees believe in a Personal God, *Ahura-Mazda*, which is interpreted the Omniscient Lord, Who is the ruler and framer of the universe.<sup>1</sup> The Confucianists also believe in the one *Ti*, "the Supreme Ruler and governor of all subordinate spirits."<sup>2</sup> The *Brahmo-Somaj*, the newest creed in India, read the Vedas and the Upanishads as teaching a consimilar doctrine.<sup>3</sup> A like doctrine was professed in the early faiths of Egypt, of China, of India, of Assyria, of Babylonia and of Keltic Druidism.<sup>4</sup>

No wonder then that Max Müller in his famous philological proof draws the conclusion that the Finns and Lapps and Tchuvashes, the Huns and Chinese and other Turanian races had in those primeval times before they separated, one common Religion which was a worship of heaven as the emblem of the Deity, the Infinite.<sup>5</sup> Likewise that the Arabians, the Syrians, the Phenicians, the Babylonians, the Carthaginians, and all who belonged to the Semitic family of men, invoked as the Supreme God, *El*, the Strong One in Heaven, and were united in one common worship of Him in that primitive age before there were Babylonians in Babylon, Phenicians in Tyre and Sidon or Jews in Mesopotamia.<sup>6</sup> Finally that the whole Aryan race, Greeks, Latins, Slavs, Kelts, Teutons, and the peoples of India before Homer sung the *Iliad* or the *Veda* was written, worshipped the Supreme Being whom they named the Heaven-Father, "Our Father who art in heaven."<sup>7</sup> With one harmonious voice these peoples all proclaim that there exists a Supreme Lord and Ruler, who controls their destinies and whom they are bound to worship and love. This is surely knowledge, not indeed of the most perfect kind, but still knowledge. Such a God is not unknowable but known.

If we turn from the primeval monotheism professed by the universal first races of men to the nature-worship and idolatry

<sup>1</sup> Jinanji Jamshodji Modi, *Religious System of the Parsees*, Neely, *op. cit.*, p. 174. Conf. *Annales du Musée Guimet*, tom. xxi; *Le Zend-Avesta, Traduction du Yasna* (par Darmstetter), p. 259, Paris, 1892.

<sup>2</sup> Pung Kwang Yu, *Confucianism*, Neely, p. 153. Conf. Max Müller, *Theosophy or Psychological Religion*, ed. cit., pp. 12-20.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. P. C. Mozoomdar, *Voice from New India*, Neely, p. 135.

<sup>4</sup> Prof. N. Valentine, *Theistic Teachings of Historic Faiths*, Neely, p. 93.

<sup>5</sup> *The Science of Religion*, ed. cit., p. 99.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.



into which it was degraded,<sup>1</sup> in them, too, we find a profession of knowledge. Hindu Pantheism is considered by many as the nearest approach to, if not identical with, Mr. Spencer's Unknowable.<sup>2</sup> But a distinction is to be made. If Brahmanism be driven to its strict logical conclusion, it will be found as a *system of philosophy*<sup>3</sup> to signify the existence of Brahma, and Brahma will be the abstract totality of all existences. In this sense the above assertion is justifiable. But the Hindu does not worship this philosophic abstraction. As a *system of Religion*, Brahmanism is quite the opposite. The heart recoils from the absurd, the Hindu concretizes the abstraction and it becomes the Supreme Good, known as eternal, holy, happy, all-merciful, the saviour. A Vedic sage speaks of Him :—

"Hear ye children of immortal bliss, I have found the ancient one who is beyond all darkness, all delusion, and *knowing* him alone you shall be saved from death again."<sup>4</sup>

The Rishis of the Veda sang :—

"Thou art our father, Thou art our mother, Thou art our beloved friend, Thou art the source of all our strength."<sup>5</sup>

Buddhism does not properly enter into the present discussion. It can neither speak in behalf of the existence of a God in any true sense of that word, nor of the existence of an Unknowable First Cause. It admits neither. It can utter no testimony. It is true that Buddhism ranks as a religion. This witnesses against Mr. Spencer's pronouncement that all religions admit the Unknowable, but Buddhism is shut out of court when judgment is pronounced on the cognoscibility or non-cognoscibility of God.

Buddhism, however, as it came from the mind of its founder, Bhagavat Sakyamuni, and as it exists in the Buddhistic canons, the *Mahayana* and *Hinayana*, may justly be regarded as an ideal theory and not a religion. Its creator evidently intended it to satisfy all the religious cravings of the soul. It has not done so.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71. Conf. Neely, *Theistic Teachings of Historic Faiths*, Prof. N. Valentine, p. 92, and *Ibid.*, *The Religions of the World*, Mgr. C. D. D'Harlez, p. 296.

<sup>2</sup> Principal Caird, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 322, new edit., New York, 1891.

<sup>3</sup> Neely, *The Ancient Religion of India*, p. 103, Rev. M. Phillips.

<sup>4</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *Hinduism as a Religion*, Neely, *op. cit.*, p. 441.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

The other creeds, no matter how degenerate or corrupt, have, as a matter of fact, each existed independent or self-sufficient among the peoples by whom they were professed. They needed support from no other belief. They stood alone claiming and receiving full religious empire. They were not, are not simply a theory, but a living observance. Such is not the case with Buddhism:

"Chinese Buddhism cannot be called an independent religion any more than Buddhism in Ceylon, Burmah and Siam, or in Nepaul, Tibet and Mongolia."<sup>1</sup>

The same is true of its greatest stronghold, Japan. Buddhism is not the practical religion of Japan, but Buddhism leaning on Confucianism and Shintoism:—

"One and the same Japanese is both a Shintoist, a Confucianist and a Buddhist. He plays a triple part, so to speak. This must be strange to you, but it is a fact. Our religion may be likened to a triangle, which is made up of three angles. One angle is Shintoism, another is Confucianism, and a third angle is Buddhism, all of which make up the religion of ordinary Japanese. Shintoism furnishes the object of objects, Confucianism offers the rules of life, while Buddhism offers the way of salvation. So you see we Japanese are eclectic in everything, even in religion."<sup>2</sup>

The Buddhistic faith is eminently practical as a dependent or supplementary creed, but a religion in the full sense of the term, which can meet all the religious requirements of our nature, it is not. One element it lacks, and that is a God. As the noble Gautama conceived it, as a full and perfect faith it is purely platonic, and as such it is destined to live in the peaceful land of theory.

Still the spectacle of the insufficiency of this unique and isolated form of Religion presents a fruitful reflection. Buddhism is insufficient because it needs the divine. A being to worship and revere, on whom our finite helplessness depends, *i. e.*, a God, is demonstrated as a natural need for the human race by the incompleteness of the teaching of Sakyamuni. Worship, reverence, recognition of dependence on the Deity clearly presuppose him knowable, however vague may be the knowledge. This makes Buddhism a strong though negative proof of the knowableness of God. Its very negation and exclusion of the Divine Being from the contents of the religious concept marshal themselves into the

<sup>1</sup> Max Müller, *The Science of Religion, Second Lecture, op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Nobuta Kishimoto, *Future of Religion in Japan*, Neely, p. 795.

ranks of the foremost factors to proclaim that man must have the Infinite, and that some knowledge of him, be it luminous in the highest degree, or be it dark in the clouds of the grossest error, is the essential heritage of the human mind.

From what has been said of the numerous and essentially diverse forms of Religions, the question naturally suggests itself is a definition of Religion possible. Mr. Spencer's definition, gathered from the collected passages we have been considering, would be: A Theory of Nescience having for its Object the Unknowable First Cause. We have established the three opposite characteristics, *i. e.*, that Religion is not *Nescience* but *knowledge*, not in the mere *theoretic* but also in the *practical* order, honoring an object not *incognizable* but *cognizable* and *cognized*.

These three marks are common to all the historic religions, yet they do not constitute a definition of Religion any more than the attributes *vegetative* and *sensitive*, which are predicated of the sum total of humanity, constitute a definition of man. To arrive at a correct definition of a word, we have to take all its different received significations and abstract the common elements, if common elements there be. These common elements will comprise the definition. If there are no common elements, there is no definition. We shall apply this process to the term "Religion." If we include Buddhism, no definition is possible; in Buddhism no form of worship enters as a constituent element. Limiting our inquiry, therefore, to the religious beliefs which profess themselves as independent, if we draw a boundary line around the great forms of historical Religions, *i. e.*, the monotheistic, pantheistic and polytheistic creeds, the definition supplied by Prof. Flint will be found applicable:—

"Religion is man's belief in a being or beings mightier than himself and inaccessible to his senses, but not indifferent to his sentiments and actions, with the feelings and practices which flow from such belief."<sup>1</sup>

This description, however, will not meet the modern anti-theistic, so-called scientific religions, *v. g.*, the religious form propounded in the work *Natural Religion* by the author of *Ecce Homo*: or the kindred creed which Strauss teaches in *The Old Faith and the New*: or that other religious scheme which has some existence in Germany, and whose name explains itself, *Idealism* or the striving for the

<sup>1</sup> *Theism, Lecture II, General Idea of Religion*, p. 32, 7 ed. revised, New York, 1893.



ideal in everything:<sup>1</sup> or, as a final instance, *Positivism* as conceived either by Mr. Harrison or by its founder, M. Comte. These and all similar forms and sub-groups either make a complete divorce between all moral or salvational action and belief, or they eliminate every concept of dependence on or even of belief in "a being or beings mightier" than man.

The only element which we can discover common to all amid the clashing, warring antithetic elements of all the creeds is "*Admiration*." Messrs. Strauss and Seely admire the order and beauty of Nature, Dr. Brodbeck admires the Ideal, Messrs. Comte and Harrison admire Departed Humanity. Admiration they all share with the great creeds of our race. But Admiration is not Religion. The artist admires the works of art, the naturalist the works of nature, man admires the nobilities of his fellow man. But assuredly that is not Religion.

To corroborate the hopelessness of a definition of Religion, accepted in this wide and most general sense, we finally append the list of conflicting definitions quoted by Professor Flint in his work on *Theism*, pp. 344 seqq.: 1. Religion consists essentially and exclusively of knowledge; 2. Religion is without the element of a rational foundation; 3. Religion is resolved into feeling or sentiment; 4. It is a figment founded on fear; 5. Desire, or an ignorant and illusive personification of man's own nature as he would wish to be; 6. A feeling of absolute dependence, of pure and complete passiveness; 7. Conscience as "the religious organ of the soul;" 8. Love; 9. A sanction for duty (Kant).

If Religion is undefinable in the generic use of the term, *i. e.*, if it has no elementary constituents or constituent common to all the religious varieties and proper and exclusive to itself, Mr. Spencer's definition—which is supposed to take in all the faiths—is once more shown to be fallacious, and his advancement of the Unknowable as the common universal constituent in all creeds and theories, appears in stronger light as illusory and historically foundationless.

#### § 23.—*The Religion of the Unknowable not a Progressive Religion.*

The full scope and aim of Mr. Spencer's religious theory is to put itself forward as a progressive religion, the expres-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. A. Brodbeck, *Idealism the New Religion*, Neely, p. 122.



sion of the last and most perfect form in the evolution of the religious life.

Fetishism, which Max Müller stigmatizes somewhere in his *Hibbert Lectures* as "a superstitious veneration for rubbish," is most undoubtedly the most degraded form of the religious sentiment. Man worships the stock and the stone.

Polytheism ascends to a higher stage. Still the limitations and imperfections of the polytheistic deities cannot satiate the soul of man. He must penetrate beyond the finite. Nothing will satisfy him until his mind contemplates the infinite beauty; his heart yearns for the infinite love; his mortality longs for an immortality, for an undecaying union with the Eternal. "It is a consummation devoutly to be wished." Shall man reach it? That is not the question. We are now speaking of the religious ideal, comparing the religious forms, Polytheism is wanting.

Pantheism supplies us with an Infinite, Immortal Being. But this Being is not a Personal God, *i. e.*, it is not a free, holy, intelligent individual, distinct and separate from the imperfect existences of the finite world. On the contrary it is "the Sat, *i. e.*, the formless All."<sup>1</sup> This "formless All," is existence pure and simple, the sum total of all existence, and apart from it there is nothing else real, all is illusion. Truth, beauty, friendship, immortality, we ourselves are mere illusions, phantoms, "fictitious emanations from Brahma like mirage from the rays of the sun."<sup>2</sup>

We need not say that such a Deity, without truth, love or anything else that is admirable, not only is not a noble, ideal object of worship, but shatters and annihilates everything that our nature looks up to. It has never existed out of the dreaming philosopher's brain, not even in the dreamy land of India, as a vital, practical religious force. It is not the *Nirguna Brahma* of the *Upanishads* but the humanized gods Agni, Vishne and Indra and Rudra and the rest, as we have already stated, that the Hindu prays and adores.

Monotheism presents the Divine Being as a Personal God, as pure, holy, eternal, living, intelligent and merciful. He can sympathize with us and befriend us; He is "our Father, Who" is "in heaven." No conception can be grander; it is the realization of

<sup>1</sup> Manibal Ni Dvivedi, *Religious Belief of the Hindus*, Neely, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, *The Ancient Religion of India*, p. 103, by Rev. Maurice Phillips, of Madras.

the human ideal. If we conceive truth, He is the fulness of truth ; if we conceive love, He is its origin and its infinite plentifulness ; if we conceive beauty, He is to whom St. Austin addresses the immortal ecstasy :—

“O pulchritudo tam antiqua quam nova !” “O beauty, ever ancient, ever new !”

Do we conceive happiness, “our being’s end and aim ?” He is “our reward exceeding great,” merciful, benign, healing our sorrows, cancelling our crimes, and when we die, clasping us in paternal embrace to the blessedness of perennial life. This is the highest ideal of the human spirit. This is the coronation of the religious evolution. All progressive religious conditions must be along these lines. We can ever grow in love and knowledge of the Infinite Truth and the Infinite Beauty. We can never grow beyond it, for there is nothing beyond.

Mr. Spencer’s religion admits an impersonal existence. The Unknowable, like Brahma, is pure existence and nothing else ; it is without intelligence, without beauty, without love. It stands on the same plane, if not lower down, as Hindu Pantheism. *To worship such a god is to retrograde, not to progress.* We defined Mr. Spencer’s Religion as a Theory of Nescience having as the object of its worship the Unknowable First Cause. We will put Monotheism, or the belief in a Personal God, by its side by way of contrast, as a conclusion to the comparative examination which has been the subject of this chapter. Mr. Spencer does not recognize Revelation. Limiting ourselves, therefore, to the monotheistic conception as it is seen by the eye of reason alone, and as it was perceived by the great Christian philosophers in their evolution of the theistic philosophy of the Stagyrte, monotheism may be defined as the recognition and worship of the Supreme Being as our Creator and Sovereign Lord and Final Rewarder.

Thus put side by side, the Unknowable God, and the Monotheistic Personal God, the reader will judge for himself which is the *Retrogressive*, which the *Progressive* Creed, which the most perfect form in the evolution of existent religious life.

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## CHAPTER II.

### MR. SPENCER'S RELIGION CONSIDERED FROM THE METAPHYSICAL STANDPOINT.

#### § 24.—*Question Stated.*

Mr. Spencer's argument viewed from the historical standpoint was: 1. Science comprehends all knowledge, therefore Religion and Nescience are identical; 2. Religion is essentially theoretical; 3. The Religious Theory, held by all forms of faiths and found to be their constituent element, is that the Power which the universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable. We have historically disproved these propositions. As Mr. Spencer passes from the historical line of argument to the metaphysical, it is our duty to follow him. The question therefore is, will Mr. Spencer's proofs stand the metaphysical test? These proofs are disposed in the following order: 1. Ultimate Religious Ideas and Ultimate Scientific Ideas are Unknowable; 2. These ideas represent the one reality underlying all appearances, *i. e.*, they represent the Unknowable; 3. The *Conditioned* or phenomenal alone is knowable; 4. The phenomenal or knowable is the object of Science, the Unknowable is the object of Religion; 5. The nature of the Unknowable is metaphysically examined and explained.

We need not dwell upon the importance to the student of Religion of a calm and impartial examination of this great question. Is the world about us an illusion or is it a reality? Are we to consider those things which we see and hear and touch, mere pictures, hollow forms, without substance, thin as air, empty nothings; or are they solid, substantial, with a body to them? Will they, like the "Ghost" in "Hamlet," fade "at the crowing of the cock?" Is Mr. Spencer's voice "the trumpet of the morn" to awake the new "god of day," the god of Modern Science, the "Unknowable," at whose warning, "the extravagant and erring spirit"—the illusion which men have called a real world—"hies to his confine," of darkness and ignorance, before the light of the day of the new philosophy? Or, on the contrary, is this world



"in which we live, move and have our being," a real, concrete, solid, substantial thing, such as it reveals itself to us? Are we ourselves, but the pictured forms of our own imaginings? Are we to ourselves unknown, except as images; the creations of our senses, mere bodily shapes and nothing more?

Mr. Spencer replies that we know the world and all existing things merely as "appearances" or "phenomena," that is, we know the images of things, we know their shapes and forms; these images do not exist outside of us; they are the creations of our senses; they are pictures painted on our imaginations with no existence outside. The universe, what is it? does it exist? what are we ourselves? do we exist? are we such as we think ourselves to be, real, live, solid flesh and bone? Mr. Spencer makes answer: we don't know, and what is more, we never can know. We know nothing except appearances; as to the rest, we are in the dark. He conceives that behind "all appearances," there is one immense, omnipresent reality, which is you and I and all things. This reality absorbs and engulfs all existences into one tremendous unity. You think and have the never-to-be-shaken conviction that you are, not a phenomenal but a real existence, and that you are distinct from your fellows, and they from you. But our author will inform you that you mistake; that this conviction is to be classed with imaginary realities,

"Strange phantoms rising as the mists arise."

All personal identity vanishes; all individual consciousness is of a phantasmal character; all plurality of existences shares the same fate. Plurality of appearances there is, forms manifold; plurality of substances, no. There is but one substance, and that is the Unknowable. Appearances, phenomena, existing nowhere but in our imagination—which is also nothing but an appearance—these alone are known to us. We know naught but shadows existing in a shadow, and we who know are also shadows.—*Shadows know shadows existing in shadows.*

§ 25.—*Ultimate Religious Ideas—Self-existence, Creation, the Cause, the Absolute, the Infinite.*

In his argument against the conceivableness of the origin of the Universe, Mr. Spencer lays down that the notions of Self-existence



and Creation "by external agency" are inconceivable (p. 30, § 11). The ratiocination against the thinkableness of Self-existence is as follows :—

"Self-existence" "necessarily means existence without a beginning; and to form a conception of self-existence is to form a conception of existence without a beginning. Now by no mental effort can we do this. To conceive existence through infinite past time implies the conception of infinite past time, which is an impossibility" (p. 31, § 11).

The sum and substance of our author's philosophy is that his Unknowable is *without a beginning*. For instance, he characterizes it as the "Ultimate Cause" (p. 108, § 31, *passim*). Being the *Ultimate* Cause, there was no cause prior to it, no cause gave it a beginning, it was without a beginning, unless you seek refuge in the absurd hypothesis that all of a sudden it sprung from non-existence into existence, producing itself. Mr. Spencer, however, wisely rejects this hypothesis which he names "self-creation." The conceivability of Self-existence, therefore, is vainly attacked by Mr. Spencer. Its validity is the life-blood of any bone and sinew there may be in his Ultimate Cause.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Spencer's illogicalness, *i. e.*, his profession in his own case of teachings, which he deems logically unverifiable in his adversaries, proves the suicide of his own doctrine, still it is no more than a negative argument in our favor. We may be wrong. This compels us to use positive demonstration. The argument is, Self-existence is unthinkable because :—

"To conceive existence through infinite past time implies the conception of infinite past time which is an impossibility."

It is impossible to form an image of any infinitude, whether of duration, space or number, an image such as we can form of a man or a horse or any other being that easily can be pictured to the senses. The mind, however, conceives thousands of *unpicturable* things. We cannot form a picture of the size of the earth, much less of the sun or the universe, yet they exist; much less can we image the whirlings of the myriad hosts of atoms and the multitudinous but ordered movements by which they marshal themselves into these mighty armies which we call the worlds.

<sup>1</sup> William M. Lacy, *An Examination of the Philosophy of the Unknowable*, § 32, p. 96, Philadelphia, 1883.

If it is not necessary that an object should be imageable to be conceivable, neither is it necessary that we should conceive separately every part of which the object is made up, as Mr. Mill clearly proves against Sir W. Hamilton.<sup>1</sup> It would be impossible to carry our thoughts in succession over every part of infinite duration. It cannot, I repeat, be exacted of us to do this, on the ground that if we do not the conception is inconceivable. On how many of our finite operations do we go through such a process? Let us take the complex period 500,000 years. This period Mr. Spencer will not claim is inconceivable. Neither will he claim that it is necessary mentally to go over every separate unit of this period so as to be able to form a conception of it. We have a real conception, however, of this vast totality of time; we can distinguish it from everything else, we know how much and what it means; it is as much a mental and a living unit as any of the smaller periods. The same may be said of infinite duration; it is not a vague or indefinite notion, but distinguishable from everything else, with its own peculiar and distinct attributes, and what more is requisite to make it conceivable?

The idea of infinite duration, like all the infinites and many more of our percepts, is partly positive and partly negative in its make-up. We conceive *duration*; we then negative *all limitation* or finiteness. Will the negative element destroy its conceivableness? In that case *imperfect, inaccurate, inapt, inert, unknowable, unknown*, and a million other ideas, which make up our daily mental and social life, will be relegated to the blank regions of inconceivableness.

*Creation "by external agency"* is the next "ultimate religious idea" presented to us as inconceivable. We are informed respecting it that:—

"Alike in the rudest creeds and in the cosmogony long current among ourselves, it is assumed that the genesis of the heavens and the earth is effected somewhat after the manner in which a workman shapes a piece of furniture. And this assumption is made not by theologians only, but by the immense majority of philosophers, past and present" (p. 33, § 11).

We suppose Mr. Spencer refers to the biblical cosmogony. We are afraid he has not read it right. He seems to confound the

<sup>1</sup> *Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy*, edit. quoted, pp. 106, 107. Conf. Martineau, *Essays, Reviews and Addresses*, vol. iii, *Science, Nescience and Faith*, p. 213, London and New York, 1891.

biblical creational narrative, "the cosmogony long current among ourselves," with the poetical cosmogony of Hesiod, the cosmogonies of Thales, Anaxagoras and Plato. These latter bear a kinship with the process of manufacture; they describe the *fashioning* of the elemental matter. Not so with the current biblical cosmogony. "The artisan," as Mr. Spencer very well says, "does not make the iron, wood or stone he uses, but merely fashions and combines them." In the biblical creation, on the contrary, the Great Artificer not merely fashions and combines the iron, wood and stone and all the pre-existing elements, but also *makes* them and *causes them to begin to exist*. A greater dissimilitude between "the process of creation and the process of manufacture" cannot possibly be presented to the mind. It is, to say the least, surprising that Mr. Spencer should assert the contrary, and the surprise is augmented by the added assertion that the analogy between the existing creational concept and that of "carpenter work" "is made not by theologians only, but by the immense majority of philosophers, past and present."

The concept of creation is simply this: that God, by His infinite power, has made the world out of nothing, *i. e.*, has caused it in all its totality to exist. We cannot conceive *how* or *in what manner* God has done this, because the mode of operation of Infinite power is beyond our apprehension. Still we can conceive *the fact*, and of the fact only there is question. We can conceive the world not existent, we can conceive it as existent, we can conceive the reason of the *transitus* from not-existence to existence, viz., the power of the Almighty Cause.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Spencer, to sustain his position of the unthinkable-ness of creation, will have to show the absurdity of any or all of these constituents.

At first sight it might seem that the transitus from not-existence to existence bears absurdity on its very face. This is not so, however, as a little reflection will show. Take any ordinary event, *v. g.*, it begins to grow cold now, it was warm a second ago. This change from heat to cold, this cold did not exist, it now begins to exist. Here is a transitus from not-existence to existence; we do not know *how* it took place but we know *the fact*, it is perfectly thinkable.

<sup>1</sup> S. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, 1, q. 45, a. 2, and *Quæst. disp.*, q. 3, *de pot.*, a. 1.



Another difficulty suggests itself; in the instance cited we see the change from heat to cold, the change is a plain fact. But in the case of creation there is no such sensible evidence. But we must reflect that in this case just as much as in creation the transitus is not a visible fact. At a certain moment we feel the heat, a moment later we cease to feel it, and we begin to feel the cold. The two facts are isolated and unconnected, as Hume has very well shown, so far as any sensuous nexus is concerned. The transitus, the ground or the reason of the passage from not-existence to existence, equally the same in either example, is the principle of causation visible to the sole eye of the mind.

The argument used by the supporters of the creational philosophy is that the mutability of the Kosmos proves that it has not in itself the ground of its own existence. Therefore it must derive its existence from some other being, *i. e.*, it must have been created. This is a philosophical explanation and as such it is scientific and must be so considered. It needs no defence here because from Mr. Spencer it suffers no attack. If Mr. Spencer turned his logical guns on it, as Mr. Mill did in his *Three Essays on Theism*, we should deem it our duty to return fire. At present we simply sketch the line of demonstration, to indicate the reasonableness of the creational position. To recapitulate, Mr. Spencer presents a carpenter-theory notion of the biblical and theological cosmogony. This is incorrect, and can suggest no proof of the inconceivableness of Creation; Mr. Spencer's argument is a misconception.

Mr. Spencer's demonstration against the conceivability of the Cause, the Absolute, the Infinite, he takes from Mr. Mansel:—

“But these three conceptions, the Cause, the Absolute, the Infinite, all equally indispensable, do they not imply contradiction to each other, when viewed in conjunction as attributes of one and the same Being? A Cause cannot as such, be absolute: the Absolute cannot as such be a cause. The cause, as such, exists only in relation to its effect: the cause is a cause of the effect; the effect is an effect of the cause. On the other hand, the conception of the Absolute implies a possible existence out of all relation” (p. 39, § 13).

No words can reveal the defect in this argument so clearly as Mr. Mill's plain solution:—

“But in what manner is a possible existence out of all relation, incompatible with the notion of a cause? Would the sun (for example) not exist if there were no earth or planets for it to illuminate? Mr. Mansel seems to think that



what is capable of existing out of all relation, cannot possibly be conceived or known in relation. If the Absolute Being cannot be conceived as Cause, it must be that he cannot exist as Cause; he must be incapable of causing. If he can be in any relation whatever to any finite thing, he is conceivable and knowable in that relation, if not otherwise. Freed from this confusion of Ideas, Mr. Mansel's argument resolves itself into this—The same Being cannot be thought by us both as Cause and as Absolute, because a Cause, *as such*, is not Absolute, and the Absolute, *as such*, is not a Cause; which is exactly as if he had said that Newton cannot be thought by us both as an Englishman and as a mathematician, because an Englishman, *as such*, is not a mathematician, nor a mathematician, *as such*, an Englishman.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Mansel's aversion to reconciling the idea of the Absolute with that of a Cause culminates in the following strange piece of reasoning: If the Absolute becomes a Cause, its effect—or the relative, as he terms it—cannot be a distinct reality from the Absolute. If it were, it would be conceived as passing from non-existence into existence; but this is impossible, he sustains:—

“For that which is conceived exists” (§ 13, p. 42).

The vanity of this curious logic is admirably shown in the following clear and forcible passage:—

“That which is conceived exists! Can I not think of the crop of next year? But it does not exist. Can I not think of the next century? Can I not think of all the things that Edward Bellamy describes in his strange book, “Looking Backward?” Must I think of these things as already existing, or not think of them at all? Can I not think of a fine crop, the best weather to form the fall fruit, and all that will rejoice the farmer next Autumn? I can conceive of them as coming into existence, and in this there is no annihilation, as Mr. Mansel strangely asserts.”<sup>2</sup>

The last part of the argument on the repugnance between the concepts, the Cause, the Absolute and the Infinite, is that:—

“The Absolute exists first by itself, and afterwards becomes a Cause. But here we are checked by the third conception, that of the Infinite. How can the Infinite become that which it was not from the first?”

*The Absolute exists first by itself, and afterwards becomes a Cause.* We deny this assertion. God, the Absolute, Infinite and Unchange-

<sup>1</sup> *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, ch. vii, pp. 118, 119. Conf. Bowne, *The Philosophy of Herbert Spencer*, p. 58 et seqq., New York, 1874.

<sup>2</sup> Rt. Rev. John J. Keane, *Herbert Spencer's First Principles: A series of Lectures delivered at the Catholic University of America, Lecture II*, 1889.

able Being, decreed by an eternal decree that at a given moment the world should begin to exist. Unlike finite power, infinite virtue can act without suffering mutation. Why? Because, being infinite, it has in itself all that is necessary to exercise causality without having recourse to a superadded mutation. Such a mutation would be superfluous and contradictory in Him Who is the fulness of infinite activity. The Absolute did not become a Cause; it was a cause from eternity. By virtue of its eternal causality the universe began at the time and moment pre-ordained in the eternal counsels.

Mr. Spencer places the main weight of his philosophy on this alleged inter-repugnance of the Cause, the Absolute and the Infinite. He recurs to it with another long quotation from Mr. Mansel's *Limits of Religious Thought*, and with one from Sir W. Hamilton's essay on the *Philosophy of the Unconditioned* (§ 24, pp. 74-79). Though these passages occur at a long distance from the passage we have just discussed, they are on the main a repetition in substance of the same arguments. For instance, in the reference from Sir W. Hamilton, under a new form occurs the proof that the *Infinite* cannot be conceived because it "would require an infinite time" for the conception (p. 74). Again, the inconceivability of the Absolute is iterated, in the reference from Mr. Mansel, in substantially the same presentment:—

"To be conscious of the Absolute, as such, we must know that an object which is given in relation to our consciousness, is identical with one which exists in its own nature out of all relation to consciousness" (p. 79).

In other words, a consciousness of the Absolute requires that it enter into relation to consciousness, but the Absolute cannot enter into relation because it "exists in its own nature out of all relation to consciousness." As this argument is repeated so often by Mr. Mansel and urged by Mr. Spencer with equal solicitude, it deserves a special attention, though it has been sufficiently overthrown in the quotation we have given from Mr. Mill. We agree with Mr. Spencer that consciousness is possible only in the form of a *relation*. There is the *Subject* or person conscious and an *Object* of which he is conscious. The Absolute will be the object of consciousness, it will bear to consciousness the relation of *object* to *subject*. We see no difficulty in this. Why cannot the Absolute like any other

term of thought be conceived, be related to consciousness as an object of knowledge? Mr. Mansel says it cannot, and the reason he gives is, if we may be allowed the tiresome repetition, that the Absolute:—

“Exists in its own nature out of all relation to consciousness.”

These words admit of two constructions. They may either mean that *the Absolute exists necessarily out of all relation*, or that it exists *only possibly out of all relation*. The argument requires that they should mean that the Absolute *exists necessarily out of all relation*. Mr. Mansel cannot intend this. In the passage we quoted from him in the beginning on the three conceptions, “the Cause, the Absolute, the Infinite” (p. 39, § 13), he states that “the conception of the absolute implies a possible existence out of all relation,” in other words that it exists *only possibly out of all relation*. Besides, Mr. Mansel nowhere asserts, much less proves, that *the Absolute exists necessarily out of all relation* to consciousness. The inconclusiveness of the argumentation is manifest.

The confusion existing in the minds of Sir W. Hamilton and Mr. Mansel is not easily explained. It is hard to see how the *Absolute* can be identified with the *Non-Relative*, taking this term in the meaning which these writers import into it. Whatever exists may be apprehended by the mind, as existing, as a cause or an effect, as intelligent or unintelligent, etc., and inasmuch as it is so apprehended it is known, it is an *object of knowledge*.<sup>1</sup> We conceive God as existing, as a cause, intelligent. He is therefore an object of knowledge for us, and as such is *related* to our consciousness. How then can the term *Non-relative* be fittingly applied to God?

There is not a shadow of a reason, nor is any reason assigned to annex this signification to the term *Absolute* as an attribute of the Deity. Will the reason be assigned that for the *Absolute* to be a *Relative*—in the sense that it can be a *cognized object*, or a *cognizing subject*—is to suffer limitations and conditions? This is nonsense. What limitations or conditions are imposed on the *Absolute* by being an *object* of our knowledge, by being known by you or me?

<sup>1</sup> John Rickaby, S. J., *General Metaphysics*, p. 361, New York, Cincinnati and Chicago.



His being is the same whether we know Him or not. Obversely, what limitations or conditions are imposed on Him by being a *subject* of knowledge, by knowing human things? If there were anything He did not know, His knowledge would not be infinite. To be a cognizing subject is not only not to limit or condition the Infinite, the Absolute; on the contrary, it expresses one of the sublime perfections of the Unlimited, the Unconditioned Being.

Mr. Spencer and Mr. Mansel's difficulties were met and solved by the Scholastic philosophy centuries ago. The whole cause of Mr. Mansel and Mr. Spencer's confusion is that they cannot conceive a relation existing between God and creatures, unless such a relation brings with it a mutation or modification in the Divine Being. This is asserted again and again in the citations we adduced from those writers. For instance, Mr. Mansel speaks of the Absolute existing "first by itself," "and afterwards" becoming a cause; in other words, when the Absolute becomes a cause, it does so by the superaddition of some quality which it had not before—it undergoes a change, it receives some new modification. If this were so, then surely would Mr. Mansel's affirmation be true, viz., that "the Cause and the Absolute imply contradiction to each other." The Scholastic philosophy saw this difficulty, as we have said, centuries ago, and answered it. The answer is simply this: God is infinite, hence unchangeable; when he assumes towards creatures the relation of cause to effect, he does so without undergoing any change. Creatures cannot become a cause without suffering mutation; the reason is because they are imperfect, finite; but God is infinite, perfect. When he causes, he does so by virtue of his infinite power; to that power nothing can be added. Because it is infinite, it can act without being changed; because it is infinite, it can do all things, remaining unchanged, unchangeable. The Infinite Being, accordingly, can be a cause or enter into any other relation with finite beings without undergoing mutation.

But the obvious difficulty suggests itself—if you say that God *becomes* a cause, do you not imply a change in him?—The meaning of the phrase *to become* a cause, when applied to God, is that God existing unchanged from all eternity, produces the effect in time; he is nominated a cause not from a change occurring in himself, but simply from the existence of the effect. He is related as



Cause to the effects he produces, not by reason of any change he suffers, but because the effects exist in virtue of his infinite causality. To put it in the language of the Schoolmen—God does not carry towards finite beings an *intrinsic* or *real* relation, *i. e.*, a relation implying mutation, or change, but he does carry a *logical* or *extrinsic* relation, *i. e.*, importing no such modification or mutation.<sup>1</sup>

But putting aside the meaning of the term *Non-relative* as above set down, and which Mr. Mansel affixes to the Absolute, in another sense the word Non-Relative has a true and existent signification. And it is, no doubt, the mixing of the two meanings which has given rise to the strange doctrine we are considering. The vocable *Absolute* in its strict philosophical and theological sense, according to Scholastic and universal Catholic teaching, signifies *existence independent of all other existences, i. e.*, existence so perfect that even if no other being existed, it could and would exist; such an existence alone is God.<sup>2</sup> This Scholastic definition has been accepted by all theistic writers and is in common use. For instance, in this acceptation, Webster defines it (the Absolute):—

“Loose from, or unconnected by dependence on any other being; self-existent, self-sufficing.”<sup>3</sup>

The Absolute, being *independent* in existence, is unmodified, unlimited, unconditioned. Contrariwise, creatures, being *dependent* on God for existence, are limited, conditioned: limited, because they have received from the First Cause a limited amount of being; conditioned, because it is only on the condition that existence was imparted to them by the First Cause that they exist. In this manner the Absolute may be defined as the Unconditioned and Non-Relative, because it exists independent, without any *relation of dependence*, on other beings. And the term Relative may be applied to all *finite and conditioned* beings, because their existence has a necessary relation of dependence on the First Cause.

The Absolute, thus defined, manifestly applies only to God. In theistic philosophy, and also in common use, the term *Absolute* has

<sup>1</sup> S. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, 1, q. 13, a. 7, ad. 2, and 1, q. 34, a. 3, ad. 2, and 1, q. 43, a. 2, ad 2.

<sup>2</sup> Braun, *Définition de l'Absolu, Congrès Scientifique Internationale des Catholiques, Bureaux des Annales de Philosophie Chrétienne*, tom. i, p. 405. Conf. S. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, 1, q. 44, a. 1, and 1-2, q. 6, a. 6 and *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> *International Dictionary* (unabr.), Springfield, Mass., 1893.

also a meaning which extends to all the beings of the universe. A thing may be considered *in itself, as an individual*, abstraction made of all things else, or it may be considered *as a part* of the world. Under different points of view, it is at the same time *absolute* and *relative* :—

“Everything sustains both an absolute and a *relative* capacity; an absolute, as it is such a thing, endued with such a nature; and a *relative*, as it is a part of the Universe, and so stands in such a relation to the whole” (South).<sup>1</sup>

To sum up, in reply to Mr. Mansel and Mr. Spencer, the Absolute and the Relative are not *opponent* terms, but *synonymous* when the Absolute sustains the relations of subject and object, etc.; they are, on the contrary, *opposite* and *antithetical* when the Absolute means—as it does in its strict metaphysical sense—*independent of any other being*, and when the Relative means *subject to the relation of a necessary dependence*.

§ 26.—*Ultimate Scientific Ideas—Force, Consciousness, Life.*

Mr. Spencer passes from the Ultimate Religious Ideas to what he classifies as Ultimate Scientific Ideas. These he condemns with the Ultimate Religious, as equally unintelligible, unknowable. He defines Science as “a higher development of common knowledge” (p. 18). Consequently, Ultimate Scientific Ideas must be the ultimate or fundamental knowledge on which the structure of Science is superimposed. Anyhow, they are knowledge of *some sort*, unless we strip the term *Scientific* of all meaning. But if Ultimate Scientific Ideas are to be classed as *knowledge*, according to Mr. Spencer’s very definition, how comes it that he devotes a special chapter to the demonstration that they are incomprehensible, unknowable, not knowledge, but its direct antithesis? Apart from this, leaving our author’s incomprehensible, unknowable use of terms in the mystery in which he enshrines them, is it true that Force, Consciousness, Life are indwellers of the land of *Nescience*, beyond all human ken?

*Force*, Mr. Spencer conceives as “an affection of consciousness” (§ 18, p. 58). He gives the following demonstration of its unintelligibility. If we lift a chair, the force we exert is equal and antagonistic to the force called the weight of the chair. Whence, he infers, the force existing in the chair is similar in nature to the

<sup>1</sup> Webster, edit. quoted, word *Relative*.

force existing within us. The force existing within us, is merely "an affection of consciousness." For this reason, we cannot conceive the force in the chair "without endowing the chair with consciousness." This conclusion, however, is absurd, and the only rational inference to be held is that force is to us an unknowable quantity (p. 58).

The first fallacy in this ratiocination is that force is an affection inherent in consciousness. Consciousness is *not* force but simply *reports* the existence of force within us.<sup>1</sup> Force is the latent power which originates in our will, and gives that muscular tension and power which neutralize the antagonizing resistance felt in the chair. This is a matter of universal experience; we all feel that, by an act of our volition, we can communicate to our limbs strength and effort to conquer resistance. In this experience three distinct elements manifest themselves to analysis. First, there is the act of volition to which we appeal to impart *force* to the limbs or muscles we wish to exercise; secondly, there is the imparting of the force from the treasures of the will, to the place to which it is directed; thirdly, there is the force in exercise, and as a resultant the consciousness of it. Mr. Spencer confuses the force exerted and the consequent consciousness; he identifies antecedent with result, cause with effect.

Having dissipated this fallacy of the identification of consciousness with force, we readily see that the conclusiveness of the argument crumbles and falls. There is no need to endow the chair "with consciousness," and force discloses itself to us in the resistance of the chair and in our opposing muscular resistance and tension. It is true that these battling resistances are not force itself; they are its manifestations, they are its effects; and as such they reveal its existence as the causal virtue and energy made manifest in them. This is our knowledge of force; we know it in the revelations of its effects, and we are conscious of it because we are conscious and feel and know as a first principle of our existence—which Mr. Spencer will not disown—that for every effect there is postulated the existence of its cause.

This issue naturally leads us to Mr. Spencer's conception of *Consciousness*. All will agree that *consciousness* is the perception of

<sup>1</sup> Crozier, *op. cit.*, p. 185. Conf. Martineau, *Science, Nescience and Faith*, *op. cit.*, p. 208.



the impressions and feelings which each one experiences in himself.<sup>1</sup> If any man denies or calls in question the existence of those impressions and experiences, he by the very fact exiles from himself all knowledge and all truth. Such a denial would be, as Descartes observed, to cut the foundations from all philosophy. Mr. Spencer reasons as follows :—

“Belief in the reality of self is, indeed, a belief which no hypothesis enables us to escape” (§ 20, p. 64).

Very true, but hear what follows :—

“It is yet a belief admitting of no justification by reason; nay, indeed, it is a belief which reason, when pressed for a distinct answer, rejects.”

We should expect that the writer of such an assertion would discontinue to philosophize. Even Mr. Mansel would not countenance such sweeping destruction. Mr. Spencer may be put the question : if the *Belief in the reality of self* is to be rejected by reason, does he, when he makes this assertion, believe that he himself makes it, or does he not believe it? And does he believe that he makes it reasonably? If he believes that he makes the assertion, and believes that it is a reasonable assertion, by the very fact he admits “the reality of self,” and admits it as a *reasonable* belief. If he does not believe that he makes the assertion, and that it is not reasonable, he tells us *ipso facto* to reject it. And what we have said of this particular assertion may be similarly said of everything Mr. Spencer has uttered. So that he encircles himself in the curious contradiction of having us buy a book which he advises us on logical grounds to repudiate.

But let us look at the arguments, which, according to our author, press reason to reject this fundamental belief. He speaks as follows :—

“The fundamental condition to all consciousness, emphatically insisted upon by Mr. Mansel in common with Sir William Hamilton and others, is the antithesis of subject and object. . . . The mental act in which self is known, implies like every other mental act, a perceiving subject and a perceived object. If, then, the object perceived is self, what is the subject that perceives? or if it is the true self which thinks, what other self can it be that is thought of. Clearly a true cognition of self implies a state in which the knowing and known are one—in which subject and object are identified; and this Mr. Mansel rightly holds to be the annihilation of both” (§ 20, p. 65).

<sup>1</sup> Pesch, *Institutiones Logicales*, Part ii, lib. i, p. 158, St. Louis, Mo., 1888.



This is an argument well reasoned out and led to a logical and true conclusion, viz., "a true cognition of self implies a state in which the knowing and known are one." But when he resumes, "and this Mr. Mansel rightly holds to be the annihilation of both," we ask on whose authority we have to accept this statement? on Mr. Mansel's or Mr. Spencer's? We demand something more than any man's authority here. Not all the *ipse dixit*s of all the philosophers will suffice in this grave matter. A statement fraught with such grave consequences needs demonstration of the most cogent character. Mr. Spencer well asserts that in self-cognition "the knowing and known are one," still, in the same breath, he wishes us to believe that Mr. Mansel is right in asserting the opposite.

The confusion in Mr. Spencer's vacillating metaphysics, and in those of his teachers, is found in their explanation of the antithesis of subject and object. They believe—Mr. Spencer forgets to tell us why—that the subject and object must necessarily be distinct entities. The *subject*, in general, is that which does the action; the *object* is that on which the action is done. The *subject of cognition* is that which *knows*, or the thinking faculty; the *object* is that which *is known*. Now what objection is there to the same person being both the subject knowing and the object known, or in other words, what repugnance is there in self-cognition? Clearly, the subject, as such, is not the object; the object, as such, is not the subject; but this distinction simply indicates that the term *subject* expresses a quality of the person of whom it is predicated, which the word *object* does not express; and, *vice versa*, that the word *object* mentions a property not contained in the vocabulum *subject*. These properties are not contradictory and, consequently, are not repugnant in the same individual. If it were said that the subject of cognition *knew* and *did not know* at the same time; or that the object was known and unknown *simultaneously*, a contradiction would be established. To *know* and *not to know* are contradictories, and incompatible in the same person; to *be known* and to *be unknown* betray a like incompatibility. To *know* and to *be known*, that is to be the subject and object of knowledge, present no such incompatibility in one and the same individual being.

If it be opposed to reason to say that a man can know himself, a like opposition must be found in asserting that a man can talk about himself, can tire himself, can refresh himself, etc., etc. A

well-known and popular writer exemplifies the matter very strikingly. He says :—

“Just as he (Mr. Spencer) tries to show the impossibility of self-knowledge, let us try to show the impossibility of self-love. We might say—‘The fundamental condition of all love is the antithesis of subject and object. If, then, the object loved be self, what is the subject that loves? Or if it be the true self that loves, what other self can it be that is loved? Self-love implies the identity of subject and object; but, by hypothesis, they must always be different; therefore no man can love himself.’ Now, since in point of fact most persons *do* love themselves, there is manifestly something wrong about this argument.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Spencer’s views on the definition of *Life* put him ashore on not less patent absurdities. He looks on life, in its triple form of vegetation, sense and intelligence, as the correspondence which exists between the changes which occur in the living being, and the changes which occur without it, when these changes are interconnected. By way of illustration, vegetal vitality would be made up chiefly of chemic changes “responding to the co-existence of light, heat, water and carbonic acid around it” (§ 25, p. 83). And to come to sensible—the same may be said of rational life—what are those actions by which the hunter pursues his prey :—

“But certain changes in the organism fitted to meet certain changes in the environment?” (§ 25, p. 83).

Hence the following definition :—

“Life is definable as the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations” (p. 84).

We are happy to agree with Mr. Spencer that wherever we find life, there we find a correspondence between the vital acts and external agents; but it by no means follows from this that life consists in this correspondence. Steam is generated by the action of heat, and wherever steam exists, there arises a correspondence between it and the calorific action. Shall we, therefore, define steam as the continuous adjustment of the relation existing *in* the steam to the relation in the calorific principle *external* to it? Nor shall the reply avail that in Life the relations are complex, whereas in the example offered they are simple. For, if we take a watch or a steam-engine, the relations are *most* complex: the relations of the

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Momerie, *Belief in God*, p. 44, 3 ed., Edinburgh and London, 1891. Conf. *Agnosticism*, pp. 38–44, by same author, *op. cit.*

parts of a watch, for instance, are very numerous, and they are so inter-related as to adjust themselves continually—provided the watch keep good time—so as to correspond with the diurnal revolutions of the sun. Here truly we find :—

“A continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations.”

Still I do not think Mr. Spencer would venture to endow the watch with life. There is an elementary principle in that part of Logic which treats of Definitions—that the definition must not be more general than the thing defined. Mr. Spencer’s definition is so general that it will make watches, steam-engines, houses, bridges and an infinity of other things all alive. A very generous act, no doubt; but, unfortunately, he will find few people to appreciate it. Does not the following rebuke seem merited?—

“It professes to be a definition of life, but really leaves life wholly out of account, in order to facilitate the work incumbent on a materialistic philosophy.”<sup>1</sup>

By way of corollary from this definition, Mr. Spencer describes cognition as :—

“The establishment of some connexion between subjective states and objective agencies” (p. 85).

This Mr. Mill explains as an affirmation “that for every proposition we can truly assert about the similitudes, successions and co-existences of our states of consciousness, there is a corresponding similitude, succession and co-existence, really obtaining among noumena beyond our consciousness, and even that we can have experience of the same.” And he is astonished that so able a defender of the Agnostic position should admit “this prodigious amount of knowledge respecting the Unknowable.” Besides recognizing “this prodigious amount of knowledge respecting the Unknowable”—about which we have no knowledge at all—how does our author come to discover that there are corresponding similitudes and changes in the objective agencies—that is, in the Unknowable? He tells us in the next page that for “every effect” produced in our consciousness, there exists a corresponding “property” in the Unknowable. How does he certify this? No certification is offered.

<sup>1</sup> Flint, *Anti-theistic Theories*, p. 504, ed. cit. Conf. Crozier, *The Religion of the Future*, ed. cit., p. 191, and Birks, *Modern Physical Fatalism*, p. 273, 2 ed., London, 1882.



Nor can it be offered in view of the neutralizing statement that the Unknowable is devoid of all properties, "the abstract of all thoughts, ideas or conceptions" (§ 26, p. 95).

§ 27.—*The Relativity of All Knowledge.*

The *sequelæ* drawn by Mr. Spencer with the aid of Sir W. Hamilton and Mr. Mansel from the incomprehensibleness of Ultimate Religious and Scientific Ideas, are: 1. Phenomena alone are knowable; 2. The existence represented by the Ultimate Ideas is unknowable, inconceivable. This creed they call the *Relativity of Knowledge*, the doctrine of the *Relativity of all Knowledge*. We have examined the grounds on which this doctrine is built. It is proper now to look at it as it stands. And, firstly, we will look at Sir W. Hamilton and Mr. Mansel's presentment. They tell us we know the sole phenomenal, that we ourselves and the whole universe of things are phenomena, mere manifestations of the Absolute (p. 74, § 24). They also tell us that: "the *Absolute* is conceived merely by a negation of conceivability" (p. 74). That: "the *Absolute* and the *Infinite*, are thus like the Inconceivable and the Imperceptible, names indicating not an object of thought or of consciousness at all, but the mere absence of the conditions under which consciousness is possible" (*Ibid.*). Still Sir W. Hamilton adds that "by a wonderful revelation, we are thus, in the very consciousness of our inability to conceive aught above the relative and finite, inspired with a belief in the existence of something unconditioned beyond the sphere of all comprehensible reality" (§ 26, p. 92).

And Mr. Mansel iterates the same: "we are compelled by the constitution of our minds, to believe in the existence of an Absolute and Infinite Being" (*Ibid.*). Man and the Universe, like the Berkeleyan matter, are simply phenomena, with an illusory existence, an illusory individuality! The only thing real about us is that we are appearances of a Being which we cannot conceive nor think, of a Being so unreal and so absurd that when we try to conceive it, we conceive "a negation of conceivability," "not an object of thought or of consciousness at all, but the mere absence of the conditions under which consciousness is possible."



The strangeness of this doctrine is heightened by the declaration that this strange Being which to *consciousness* is the *negation* of existence, to *belief* is *positive* existence, in fact the only real and true existence! And that "we are compelled by the constitution of our minds" to admit it as such, in other words, "we are compelled by the constitution of our minds to *believe*" that which by the constitution of the same minds we are compelled to *deny*, as repugnant and contradictory to the very laws of thought!

Mr. Spencer also admits the phenomenal character of all knowledge. He admits with Sir W. Hamilton and Mr. Mansel, as has been said above, and we shall now put it in his own words, that:—"the answer of pure logic is held to be, that by the limits of our intelligence we are rigorously confined within the relative; and that anything transcending the relative can be thought of only as a pure negation, or as a non-existence. "The *absolute* is conceived merely by a negation of conceivability," writes Sir W. Hamilton. "The *Absolute* and the *Infinite*," says Mr. Mansel, "are thus like the *Inconceivable* and the *Imperceptible*, names indicating not an object of thought or of consciousness at all, but the mere absence of the conditions under which consciousness is possible" (p. 87, § 26). Sir W. Hamilton and Mr. Mansel accept the doctrine contained in these propositions, as it stands. Not so with Mr. Spencer though he approvingly quotes it. He considers that the above definitions of the Absolute and the Infinite, viz., "negation of conceivability" and "absence of the conditions under which consciousness is possible" are "nonsense" and "simply an elaborate suicide" (p. 88).

Mr. Spencer strives to explain this strange interpretation by the pronouncement that the doctrine is *logically true* but *psychologically false* (p. 87). This explanation entangles him in a deeper net. What is logically true cannot be psychologically false. There can be no war between our logical and psychological faculties. Such a radical vice in the constitution of those faculties or powers of the soul, is as elaborate an intellectual suicide as the antagonism, placed by Sir W. Hamilton and Mr. Mansel, between *Belief* and *Consciousness*. Mr. Spencer cannot, therefore, escape from the pit-falls into which Sir W. Hamilton and Mr. Mansel hopelessly fell, by flying to a psychological escape. Psychological escape there is none and

he must, with them, stand by the *answer of pure logic*,<sup>1</sup> unless he desires to seek other inconsistencies.

A sample of these inconsistencies is: Mr. Spencer, desiring to justify his psychological escape, tells us that "every one of the arguments by which the relativity of our knowledge is demonstrated distinctly postulates the existence of something beyond the relative" (p. 88), *i. e.*, distinctly postulates the Absolute, as he affirms in the next sentence. Now, arguments are the instruments of logic. The existence of the Absolute—Mr. Spencer's psychological doctrine—is built on arguments, is built on logic. "The answer of pure logic" is that the Absolute is the "negation of conceivability," the "absence of the conditions under which consciousness is possible;" on the other hand, the answer of the logic on which the "psychological aspect" rests, is that the Absolute is *a positive existence*. But it cannot be at the same time a mere *negation* and a *positive existence*. Mr. Spencer accepted the principles of Sir W. Hamilton and Mansel. "*The answer of pure logic*," reasoning from these principles, is that "the *absolute* is conceived merely by a negation of conceivability," etc. To be consistent, Mr. Spencer must accept this "answer of pure logic," however absurd it may be. In his position it does not seem becoming to annex to it such epithets as "an elaborate suicide," "nonsense" (p. 88).

#### § 28.—*The Unknowable.—Its Attributes.*

Mr. Spencer's doctrine of the Unknowable it is now proper in brief to sketch. This doctrine is, to his mind, the ultimate result and natural *sequela* from the historical and metaphysical demonstrations we have been examining. With Sir W. Hamilton and Mr. Mansel, he is agreed that we know the sole phenomenal; that the kosmos of beings, from the lowest atom of brute matter to the intellectual grandeur of man, are phenomena, appearances of a contradictory being called the Absolute; that the Absolute, by the laws of *logical* deduction, is demonstrated to be to our minds a *pure negation*. Nevertheless, that it is *psychologically* an emphatically

<sup>1</sup> E. Pace, *Das Relativitätsprincip in Herbert Spencer's psychologischer Entwicklungslehre*, Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der philosophischen Doctorwürde an der Universität Leipzig, p. 63, Leipzig, 1891.

positive existence, *the only existence*. He tells us next, he explains to us what this existence is : 1. We “know only certain impressions produced on us.” These impressions we are “compelled to think in relation to a positive cause.” This cause is one, the Absolute. 2. Philosophy condemns the attribution of any form or limit in this Absolute Cause ; this makes our consciousness of it a “consciousness of the unformed and unlimited” (p. 94, § 26). 3. The Absolute, when set in contrast with the *Relative*, has *real* existence. The existence of the latter is not real, but phenomenal. 4. The Absolute is related to the Relative. 5. The Absolute is unknowable, is *the Unknowable*. 6. We must refrain from assigning to the Unknowable any attributes whatever. Such assignation is Anthropomorphism. 7. This theory is the *Reconciliation of Religion, Philosophy and Science*. 8. The Unknowable is the new God.

Now, all that has been said hereto cuts the foundations from Mr. Spencer's theory which we have just expounded. The present criticism, therefore, must not be considered as necessary ; it may be, however, useful, as it will show the doctrine as it directly presents itself requesting rational acceptance. Had Mr. Spencer demonstrated the inconceivableness of the Ultimate Religious and Scientific Ideas, the assertion of the enclosure of our knowledge within the sphere of impressions would be a strictly logical inference. This he has not done. The following statement—that we are compelled to think these impressions in relation to *one* positive cause—must also be viewed as baseless. It is true we must think of them in relation to a positive cause, but the question is : must each individual impression, or each individual set of impressions be ascribed to an individual separate cause, thus making as many distinct separate causes as their impressions or sets of impressions, or must the totality of impressions be ascribed to only one cause, namely the Absolute ? Mr. Spencer means the latter. He does not tell us *why*. I feel certain impressions, *v. g.*, *I think, I am now seeing, hearing, standing*. I feel, I am conscious that these actions and impressions are mine and that they belong to nobody else. I am the cause of them and of a thousand other things. So is every other man. This truth is so self-evident that we should deem a man utterly wrong in his senses who would deny or question it. We are each of us conscious that we are distinct separate causes of



distinct separate effects. Therefore there is not one cause of the universe of impressions, but causes many and various. The one Absolute sole Cause is without foundation.

The next proposition is that philosophy repudiates the assignment of any form or limit to this one Absolute Cause. We have dissipated the doctrine of the submersion of all causes into the one Absolute Cause. Let us suppose, however, the Pantheistic proposition of the all-identifying one Absolute causal Existence, does philosophy negative the predication of forms and limits in it? Does true philosophy condemn the attachment of any form or limit to the Absolute, and what do we mean by the assertion? or rather let us hear Mr. Spencer explain what he means by it:—

“Though Philosophy condemns successively each attempted conception of the Absolute—though it proves to us that the Absolute is not this, nor that, nor that—though in obedience to it we negative, one after another, each idea as it arises; yet, as we cannot expel the entire contents of consciousness, there ever remains behind an element which passes into new shapes. The continual negation of each particular form and limit, simply results in the more or less complete abstraction of all forms and limits; and so ends in an indefinite consciousness of the unformed and unlimited” (p. 94).

He proceeds:—

“This consciousness is not the abstract of any one group of thoughts, ideas or conceptions, but it is the abstract of *all* thoughts, ideas or conceptions. That which is common to them all and cannot be got rid of, is what we predicate by the word existence. Dissociated as this becomes from each of its modes by the perpetual change of those modes, it remains as an indefinite consciousness of something constant under all modes—of being apart from its appearances” (p. 95).

This “being apart from its appearances” is the Absolute (p. 96). Mr. Spencer, as we have remarked, will not follow Sir W. Hamilton and Mr. Mansel in negating each idea of the Absolute to the extent of making it “a negation of conceivability.” He must have it *positive*. Consequently he descends from all particular thoughts, and he finds, by means of successive abstractions, that the ultimate element common to them all is “*being*,” *indefinite being*. This ultimate element he then declares the Absolute. We happily agree with Mr. Spencer that the common ultimate element in all our thoughts is the idea of “indefinite being.” The notion of being is the central element in all thoughts and ideas; every other notion the mind can abstract from, the notion of being it cannot. Mr. Spencer,



therefore, is right and in full accord with the Schoolmen, in making being the essence of all thought, and the one universal element resident in it. But does it follow that this concept of abstract indefinite being is the concept of the Absolute? A moment's pause will show it is not. In the citations made above the Absolute is described as the Absolute Cause, and Mr. Spencer is continually telling us it is the Ultimate Cause. The issue is, are the two concepts the *Absolute First Cause*, and the bare notion of *being* identical? Assuredly not; the first adds to the notion of being the notion of a First Cause. The concept of being and the concept of being + a First Cause are not the same. Or to put it another way, the "indefinite consciousness of the unformed and unlimited" is not the equivalent of the consciousness of a being + the *form* of a First Cause.

The next point of doctrine is that the Absolute, when contrasted with the relative, has real existence, whereas the latter's existence is only phenomenal. The reason assigned is that our consciousness of the Absolute, *i. e.*, of the unformed and unlimited, or indefinite being, is the unchangeable element in all thought, all other thoughts being changeable. The sense of this proposition is that the conception of being, as has already been remarked, is found in all thinking, that, on the one hand, no thought can exist which has not in it this element, whereas, on the other, it can be in the cogitative action, when all other elements of thought have disappeared. In this manner it appears as the unchangeable constituent of thought, and other thoughts manifest themselves as changeable, variable. But what has this to do with Absolute or Relative Existence? Will the fact that the idea of mere being is the ultimate element in thought, when all the others are removed by abstraction, endow it with Absolute Existence? The *notion* of abstract being *in the mind* and the *existence* of such a being *out of the mind* are two things different altogether. And Mr. Spencer's proposition comes to this, the notion of being is the common element in all thinking, *therefore* it exists. Common element or not, it still remains a mental element, and the weakness remains, *viz.*, the mere fact that a concept exists in the mind does not establish the existence of an object out of the mind. And this is true no matter *how* the concept exists mentally.

Again, if it be true that, because the percept of Being is the essential ingredient of all thought, that therefore it must exist, how will it be when we don't think? If it exists because, when we think, we must think of it, why should it not cease to exist when we cease to think of it? Surely objective existence is no inference from the mere fact of mental existence. Further, the notion of the Absolute as a First Cause is changeable; it can be banished from thought like the rest of our changeable thoughts. We can abstract from the elements "First" and "Cause," and we do so when we conceive pure being. What, then, becomes of the Absolute First Cause? It has become a relative, phenomenal, its objective existence has vanished.

And again, *existence* and *being* are confounded by Mr. Spencer. The ultimate element in all thought is not *existence*, but *being*, viz., whatever is apt to exist, whether it exists or no.<sup>1</sup> If *actual* existence were the ultimate mental element, whatever would be conceived would include it. A thousand things may be conceived, however, which have no actual existence. For example, "a mountain of gold," "the Spaniards' El Dorado." And what would the poet, the novelist do, what would any of the arts or sciences without the *unexistent* ideal to contemplate and to copy from? There are two kinds of being, *actual being* and *possible being*. Actual being is *existence*, possible being is the possibility of existence. This confusion of "being" and "existence" is made in plain terms by Mr. Spencer. We transcribe his description of the consciousness of the ultimate element:—

"It is the abstract of *all* thoughts, ideas or conceptions. That which is common to them all, and cannot be got rid of, is what we predicate by the word *existence*" (p. 95).

This "abstract of all thoughts, ideas or conceptions," this ultimate element, is, not *existence* but *being*, and the argument falls as useless and illusory.

Furthermore, *relative* or *phenomenal* existence, as conceived by Mr. Mansel and adopted by Mr. Spencer, "is but a name for the several ways in which objects are presented to our consciousness" (p. 78, § 24). We and the universal kosmos are *relatives* or *phe-*

<sup>1</sup> John Rickaby, S. J., *General Metaphysics*, p. 21, New York, Cincinnati, Chicago.

*nomena*, we are mere manners of presentations before consciousness, *i. e.*, we are mere acts of consciousness, mere modes of thought. These thoughts or states of consciousness, being purely mental entities, are made up of purely mental elements also. Mr. Spencer obtains the ultimate element in question, by abstracting it from the "thoughts, ideas and conceptions" which, we have said, constitute relative existence. It is "that which is common to them all," and, as it is common to them all, it is a part of them, it remains relative, it cannot enter into the sphere of the Absolute.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Spencer is hopelessly encircled in relative existence. There is no egress for him to cross the bridge to the Absolute, the extra-mental. He confounds *abstract being* and *actual existence*, the phenomenal and the Absolute, the common element of thought and its objective reality. The climax of this entanglement is found in a later Essay in the following words: "Since an ultimate analysis brings us everywhere to alternative impossibilities of thought, we are shown that beyond the phenomenal order of things our ideas of possible and impossible are irrelevant."<sup>2</sup>—Our ideas of possible and impossible are prior to our ideas of existence and non-existence. For a thing to exist it must be possible; the impossible cannot exist. So that, if beyond the phenomenal order of things our ideas of possible and impossible are irrelevant, whatever ratiocination we build on those ideas, affecting our consciousness of existence, must be also irrelevant. By way of example, Mr. Spencer reasons, with respect to the existence of the Absolute, that its persistence in consciousness "under successive conditions *necessitates* a sense of it as distinguished from the conditions and independent of them." This distinction from the conditions, this independence of them are the endowments of the Absolute, and as such they are absolute, extra-mental, "beyond the phenomenal order of things." But are they possible or impossible? The reply must be, we do not know, for beyond the phenomenal order our ideas of possible are irrelevant. And, if we cannot know whether they are possible or no, we cannot know whether they belong to the Absolute or no, and the affirmation that we have a consciousness or sense of the existence of the Absolute "as distinguished from conditions and independent of them" becomes, as far as we are concerned, chimerical.

<sup>1</sup> E. Pace, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> *Retrospective Religion, Nineteenth Century*, July, 1884.



Finally, let it be allowed for the nonce that this Absolute exists. What can be said about it? We have an indefinite consciousness, but not knowledge, that it is pure existence, and the "abstract of *all* thoughts, ideas and conceptions." We know not whether it is possible or impossible, necessary or unnecessary, eternal or temporal, to be adored or to be mocked, whether it is higher or lower than we. We cannot reason about it; any predication we make must be irrelevant. It is cut off from the laws of thought. It is insulated like an electric current with a *noli me tangere* placarded on its mysterious envelope. Mr. Spencer will allow us *an indefinite consciousness* of it, a vague feeling of nude existence forever unknowable and unknown, a perfect stranger to us, the only thing we ever heard of which is *in every sense* a mystery!

The next pronouncement for our consideration is that this Absolute is related to the Relative. We are told that "the Relative is itself inconceivable, except as related to a real Non-relative" (p. 96). The Absolute, the Non-relative is *related* to the Relative, *i. e.*, it is reduced to the term of a relation, it becomes a relative. The Non-relative turns out to be a relative in disguise, it is absolute no more, and, as Dr. Martineau says, its alleged unknowableness is discharged!<sup>1</sup>

The incoherence of this strange doctrine dissolves Mr. Spencer's next affirmation that the Absolute is forever unknowable and unknown. This is manifest, even in Mr. Spencer's definition of Knowledge and Nescience, which confines *knowledge* to the relative or phenomenal, and *nescience* to what is latent under phenomena. For, the Relative being the object of knowledge, if the Non-relative becomes a relative, *ipso facto*, it becomes knowable and known. Apart from this, Mr. Spencer's attribution of causality to the Absolute entitles it to rank as knowledge. For it has been demonstrated by historic evidence and by the witness of a cloud of testimonies that, Mr. Spencer's partition of the territories of Knowledge and Nescience is a violation of the definitions.

Besides, Realism has at all times designated the apprehension of a cause from its effects by the word *knowledge*. How do you know the *cause* exists? Realism replies, by its effects. Do you know what

<sup>1</sup> *Science, Nescience and Faith*, *op. cit.*, p. 198.



the cause is in itself? I do not, it makes answer, I simply know that to produce the effect, it must exist and must have the virtue proportionate to the effect produced.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Spencer upholds this same doctrine and by it declares that the Absolute is the Ultimate Cause. The Realist and he are one in the doctrine. The Realist with all mankind calls it *knowledge*,<sup>2</sup> Mr. Spencer calls it *Nescience*. We do not object to a difference in name, but we do object to Mr. Spencer's use of the term *Nescience*, as opposed, not in name but in reality, to the word *Knowledge*.

The assignation to the Unknowable of any attributes is *anthropomorphic*, akin to the anthropomorphism of a Personal God. Here is the reason set down :—

“And may we not, therefore, rightly refrain from assigning to it (the Unknowable) any attributes whatever on the ground that such attributes, derived as they must be from our natures, are not elevations but degradations. Indeed it seems somewhat strange that men should suppose the highest worship to lie in assimilating the object of their worship to themselves” (p. 109, § 31).

It is indeed true, the tendencies towards investing the Deity with a human shape have, at all times, greatly prevailed among the human race. The Greeks were instinctively an anthropomorphic nation ; their Gods, in the condemnatory language of Aristotle, were naught “save eternal men.”<sup>3</sup> The assimilation of God to the likeness of animals was an error that flourished in Egypt, and we find the Israelites cautioned against it in the law of Moses, *v. g.*, in the Second Commandment. One of the early heresies of the Christian Church took its rise from the attempted introduction of the anthropomorphic inclination, and was branded with the condemnatory title of “*Anthropomorphism*.”

The *dictum* of Heraclitus was not at that time without its point, “men are mortal Gods, and the Gods immortal men.” In a similar strain, said Xenophanes, if horses and oxen and lions were able to paint they would picture the Gods like themselves. Spinoza's reproduction of this sneer is almost identical : it is, that if a circle could think it would suppose the essence of the Deity to be circularity. Goethe speaks more profoundly, “man never knows how anthropomorphic he is.”

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *op. cit.*, Book i, ch. iii, p. 12 and *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Max Müller, *Why I am not an Agnostic, Nineteenth Century*, p. 892, Dec., 1894.

<sup>3</sup> *op. cit.*, Book ii, ch. ii, p. 62.

The anthropomorphic tendency, viz., *the humanization of the Divine*, is certainly within us. Mr. Spencer is right, men must not assimilate "the object of their worship to themselves." To shape the Divinity in a body, to fit in him a human mind, or a human will, or a human personality, is to anthropomorphize Him. But is this accusation of Mr. Spencer against existent Theism, a merited charge, is it grounded on fact? It assuredly is, if Theism clothes the Divine Being in the attributes mentioned above. Theism, however, denies the charge; it confesses and teaches that God must have mind and will and personality, but it denies that this mind must be a *human* mind, this will a *human* will, this personality a *human* personality, yea, it says that they must be the very opposites of human. And it retorts on Mr. Spencer that it is rather he at whose door the imputation may be laid. It recalls that it was Protagoras, the Greek protagonist of modern Agnosticism, who first uttered the famous agnostic axiom, "man is the measure of all things," thereby reducing all things to a purely human standard and likeness. Mr. Spencer applies this principle to the letter. He declares, in his reply to Dr. Martineau, as follows:—"If then I have to conceive evolution as caused by an originating Mind, I must conceive this Mind akin to the only mind, I know, and without which I cannot conceive mind at all."<sup>1</sup>

Again, according to the same Protagorean measure, he avers that it is impossible for us to conceive a Deity save as some "idealization of ourselves," and this in all creeds.<sup>2</sup> And this same assimilating of the divine attributes to the human pervades all the current agnostic and anti-theistic literature of the day. Such men as Messrs. Huxley and Tyndall, Matthew Arnold and the Author of *Natural Religion*, Lange, Strauss and Du Bois-Reymond are to be charged with it.<sup>3</sup> Theism, then, seems to have proved the anthropomorphic accusation against Agnosticism. This, however, will stand only in the hypothesis that a mind and personality unlike our own are capable of being conceived. This the theist maintains. *Immediate*

<sup>1</sup> *Popular Science Monthly*, July, 1872.

<sup>2</sup> *Essays, Scientific, Political and Speculative*, vol. i; *The Use of Anthropomorphism*, p. 446, ed. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, p. 27, London and New York, 1889; F. Strauss, *The Old Faith and the New*, vol. i, p. 136 and seqq., 3d Eng. ed., London, 1874.

knowledge of mind other than his own he allows he has not. He admits, too, that human mental power is found only in connection with a cerebral apparatus, but he denies that it is this apparatus that thinks and acts.<sup>1</sup> He is agreed with Prof. Tyndall that for every fact of consciousness, "a definite molecular condition of motion or structure is set up in the brain."<sup>2</sup> This with him is a case of empirical association, a law of co-ordinate action regulating the dependence of the mind of man on the material mechanism, with which it is copulated in its present existence. But, he argues, consciousness, thought is a purely mental action without any alloy in its make-up from the material, and on this ground does not essentially need the material for its existence. In other words, if human thought needs a material instrument, it needs it not *as thought*, but as *human thought*, *i. e.*, *because of its material alliance in the human composite*.<sup>3</sup> It says in brief: thought as such is independent of matter, therefore it can exist independent of matter. Such an existence is the Divine Mind, Who—as Christian Theology teaches—is a Pure Spirit, without corporeal parts and passions. And this surely is not anthropomorphism but its direct antithesis.

However, it is with Mr. Spencer the burden of the proof lies, he it is who accuses. Still, in the several pages which occupy the charge of theistic anthropomorphism, Mr. Spencer fails to adduce any reason, why the alleged anthropomorphic attributes of the Infinite Being should be derived "from our nature." It is incumbent on him to make good, why mind, will, personality, disengaged from matter and mortality, should be similar to the same properties associated with mortality, *i. e.*, why a Personal God, the Living Being, who is not, like man, bounded by any bodily organism,<sup>4</sup> should be the anthropomorphous expression of our personality which implies mortality.

Mr. Spencer bids us to refrain from predicating any kind of intelligence, will or personality, because, perhaps, there is something higher than these in the Unknowable (p. 109). This does not

<sup>1</sup> The Duke of Argyll, *The Unity of Nature*, ch. v, p. 203, London and New York, 1884.

<sup>2</sup> *Scientific Materialism*, *op. cit.*, p. 419.

<sup>3</sup> Martineau, *Religion as affected by Modern Materialism*, with *Modern Materialism: its Attitude towards Theology*, part ii, pp. 59 sqq., 6th ed., London, 1878. Conf. V. Tymms, *The Mystery of God*, p. 70, 2nd ed., New York, 1887.

<sup>4</sup> Tymms, *op. cit.*, p. 73.



very well accord with the teaching that the Unknowable is pure, abstract Existence and nothing besides. He states that there is, perhaps, something higher than person or mind. Mr. Spencer does not call in question the principle of contradiction; he will not, therefore, deny the proposition that whatever exists is intelligent or unintelligent. There is no mean. When, therefore, Mr. Spencer affirms that there is, perhaps, something higher than intelligence in the Unknowable, he equivalently states that the *unintelligent* is, perhaps, *higher* than the *intelligent*, that that which acts *blindly* is higher, perhaps, than that which acts *intelligently*, that brute force is, perhaps, higher than mind. Such a doctrine needs no refutation.

In the present state of Theology and Metaphysics, enlightened and illumined by the Christian and Israelitic Revelation on the one hand, and the new Apocalypse of nature, revealed in the Natural Science of to-day, on the other, anthropomorphism is of the effete and exploded past. We maintain that God is a Spirit, incorporeal, without a body or a brain; that He is pure, perfect Intelligence and Will; to Whom we are *like* as intelligent and free, *unlike* as Finite, He being the Infinite.<sup>1</sup> Theism places Him *all above us*, for the noblest thing is Infinite Mind. Agnosticism refuses Him this noblest endowment and, by the very refusal, places Him *all below us*. For if Mind be noblest, its antipodal extreme, Blind Force, must be lowest. The charge of Anthropomorphism, then, falls; falls historically, it is not a theological tenet; falls philosophically, the philosophic concepts of the human and the divine attributes are set together not as *assimilated* but dissimilar. Not Anthropomorphism but Non-anthropomorphism is the endowment of a Personal God.

§ 29.—*The Unknowable as the Reconciliation of Religion, Science and Philosophy.*

The creed of the Unknowable is next advanced as the Reconciliation of Religion, Science and Philosophy. It is the Reconciliation of Religion and Science, we are apprised, because it is "the most abstract truth contained in Religion and the most abstract truth contained in Science" (§ 8, p. 23), the verity common to the two. Science, *i. e.*, the family of the Sciences, "stands for nothing more

<sup>1</sup>S. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, 1, q. 13, a. 3 and a. 5.

than the sum of knowledge formed of their contributions, and ignores the knowledge constituted by the *fusion* of all these contributions into a whole." It remains for Philosophy to unify them, "Philosophy is *completely-unified knowledge*" (p. 134, § 38). And the expression of this unification is the *Law of Evolution*. As in the case of Science and Religion, similarly is it with Religion and Philosophy, the transcendent existence of the Unknowable is the ultimate truth which each has in common (§ 191, p. 551).

There is a fundamental harmony between Religion, Science and Philosophy. They each express different orders of verities. It will consequently make a very strong antecedent probability in support of his religious view, if Mr. Spencer has success in establishing a common harmonious basic principle, on which may be reared the three great sister temples of Religion, Science and Philosophy. The Unknowable is the Reconciliation of Religion and Science because it is the truth contained in each of them. This proposition supposes that Religion and Science are contrasted as *Knowledge* and *Nescience*; this, however, has been shown to be historically false. In addition, if we allow the contrast that Religion is *Nescience* and Science *Knowledge*, where can a common element enter? It must be *unknowable* as the object of *Religion*, and *knowable* as the object of *Science*. And to tell Mr. Spencer that the Unknowable of Religion is scientifically Knowable, would be to speak rank heresy to his ears. Obversely, if Science be *Knowledge*, ultimate scientific ideas, to be scientific, must be known.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Spencer devotes a whole chapter (Chapter iii, p. 46-67) to the thesis that they are unknowable, *i. e.*, that they are not scientific but religious. Mr. Spencer's "Ultimate Scientific Ideas," Mr. Spencer's Science, is Religion in disguise; Mr. Spencer's Religion is Science in disguise. They are not separate, but confused; not living in distinct domains, but each becoming a subject of the other, according as it pleases her to pass over into the other's country. The confusion of this vacillating definition makes itself felt at once. If the Unknowable be the ultimate Scientific verity, it must be one of the objects of Science. But Religion claims the Unknowable as proper exclusively to itself. A quarrel at once ensues; Reconciliation is lost, Disharmony has prevailed.

<sup>1</sup> M. Guthrie, *On Mr. Spencer's Formula of Evolution*, p. 177, London, 1879.

The existence of the Unknowable Cause is also the common Religious and Philosophical constituent. In this way, Philosophy is the complete unification of Knowledge. This unified Knowledge is supplied by the Formula of Evolution. Mr. Spencer's pronouncement, of a consequence, issues in this: is the Theory of Evolution connected with Religion, and how?—The Evolutionary Theory is ultimately based on the recognition of: "a persistent Force, ever changing its manifestations, but unchanged in quantity throughout all past time and future time." And it is this recognition of a persistent Force, in other words, of the Unknowable, which "alone makes possible each concrete interpretation, and at last unifies all concrete interpretations" (§ 191, p. 552). Briefly, both agree in the recognition of the Unknowable.

Philosophy is Knowledge, Religion, Nescience; how is it possible for them to have a common element? how can Philosophy know the Unknowable? The same ratiocinations that we just used to dissolve the reconciliatory theory of Mr. Spencer's Religion and Science, can be applied here, and they discharge the alleged Harmony. This response is decisive. But allowing that the Law of Evolution is the universal all-embracing expression of the manifestations of the unknown persistent Force, is this formula the unification of all knowledge? The proposed unification is set in the following words:—

"A philosophy stands self-convicted of inadequacy if it does not formulate the whole series of changes passed through by every existence in its passage from the imperceptible to the perceptible and again from the perceptible to the imperceptible" (p. 542, § 186).

Evolution is the philosophic formula required. It formulates the whole cycle of changes passed through by every existence and is definable as:—

"An integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion; during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity; and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation" (§ 145, p. 396).

The two factors of this formula, as may be seen by its reading, are Matter and Motion; in Mr. Spencer's words, it expresses "the continuous redistribution of Matter and Motion." It is "a statement of the truth that the concentration of Matter implies the



dissipation of Motion, and that conversely, the absorption of Matter implies the diffusion of Motion" (§ 186, p. 542).

The problem before us is simply this: is the Law of Evolution, as here expounded by Mr. Spencer, *the unification of all knowledge*? To be this unification it must establish a nexus between the Kosmos of inorganic and organic beings, it must show that the Kosmos of inorganic and organic existences is a product of mere elementary Matter subjected under the laws of Motion, it must demonstrate that Mind originated from the primal Matter by a merely mechanical process. This is the question: how did Mind arise from Matter? will Matter, moulded under the laws of Motion, explain the genesis of Mind?

Mr. Spencer does not answer this question, neither can he. For, if mind sprung from matter and motion, it could be described in geometrical or mathematical terms, it could be formulated geometrically, mechanically.<sup>1</sup> Such formulation, however, is not comprehensible. What formula will express the mental in terms of the physical? will unify the regions of mental and physical phenomena? There is an impassable chasm between them. If any one would like to see the chasm bridged it is Prof. Tyndall. Yet he must say:—

"The passage from the physics of the brain to the corresponding facts of consciousness is unthinkable. . . . We do not possess the intellectual organ, nor apparently any rudiment of the organ, which would enable us to pass, by a process of reasoning from the one to the other. They appear together, but we do not know why."<sup>2</sup>

And this is the unanimous voice of all thinkers, the sympathetically inclined to Mr. Spencer no less than the unsympathetic. The first genesis of life from any material source is an insoluble problem. Nor will the difficulty be diminished by Mr. Spencer's "conception of a perfect gradation from purely physical to mental life." The transitus from the one to the other remains unaccounted for; it is the missing link which cannot even be conceived much less explained.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Spencer's Formula of Evolution has proved to be utterly inadequate. Its two factors, Matter and Motion, have failed to account for Life and Consciousness. It is not the unifica-

<sup>1</sup> Guthrie, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> *Scientific Materialism*, *op. cit.*, p. 420.

<sup>3</sup> Sully, *Evolution*, *Encycl. Brit.*, v. viii, 9th ed., 1879.

tion of all Knowledge, and for this reason cannot be the proposed Reconciliation of Religion and Philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

§ 30.—*The Theory of the Unknowable Versus Christianity.  
Which is Scientific?*

But it is not so much the proposal of a common concordant ground-principle for Religion and Science, nor the advancement of the scheme of the *unifying* Synthetic Philosophy, that has given to Mr. Spencer's religious agnosticism the heavy weight it has in the eyes of his sympathizers, nor the immense amount of consideration that it has elicited from the universal heterogeneous reading public, friends not more than foes. It is the fact, that it is proposed as the product and the outcome of modern scientific research, that it is the last growth in the stage of human progress, routing and exploding Christianity and the Biblical cosmogony, and relegating them to the regions of obsolete religious civilization. Mr. Spencer has turned the eyes of the world on the question: has the Agnostic Evolutionary Science of the day disproved the Theism of the Bible? or, to put the question as expressed in the theistic view, on what grounds does the theory of the Evolutional God rest *versus* the God of Biblical Theism? To put it in a nutshell, Mr. Spencer awoke universal interest because he proposed the Theory of Evolution as *Scientific*, and *scientifically* annihilating the biblical theistic cosmogony. Now it may seem arrogant—and doubtless it will so seem—to some, still we do not hesitate to make the assertion that it is Mr. Spencer's Evolutionism which is *unscientific*, and that it is to its theistic opponent that the attribute of *scientific* must be annexed.

To clear the brush-wood from our path some preliminary statements are essential. In its conflict with Christianity, Mr. Spencer and the rest of anti-theistic evolutionists take for granted that, the biblical creational narrative of the six days must be taken in its *literal* sense, that this is the sole sense in which it is received by Christian Theology, in a word, that this sense and the Christian Faith concerning the origin of things are identical. On this supposition they build their arguments; from it, as from a well-stocked arsenal, they supply the powder and ball to their guns, when they

<sup>1</sup> Guthrie, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

form in line against Theism. To be sure, such modes of reasoning are only indirect and negative as far as the establishment of their own position is concerned, still they make a strong bias against Christianity, and place it in a prejudiced light. Mr. Spencer makes theologians in general, without any distinction, and the sacred cosmogonical theory represent the creator effecting the Kosmic genesis by immediate agency, like a human artificer. By his immediate hand the "Great Artificer" fashions the primal material and forms the suns, and planets and satellites (pp. 34, 35). We will quote from an author who may be regarded in this matter as representative:—

"Sacred Science as interpreted by the Fathers of the Church demonstrated these facts: 1. That the date of Creation was comparatively recent, not more than four or five thousand years before Christ; 2. That the act of Creation occupied the space of six ordinary days."<sup>1</sup>

On the next page is added:—

"Sacred cosmogony regards the formation and modeling of the earth as the direct act of God, it rejects the intervention of secondary causes in those events."

Now these assertions are utterly incorrect, and betray a very pronounced, a very happy unacquaintance with the theologic and patristic interpretations of the first chapter of Genesis. Instead of the *one sole* interpretation, cited above, of the Hexahemeron or Six days of Creation, we discover three: the first takes them *metaphorically* and as meaning one period of time; the second accepts them *literally* as six common days; the third reads them as *indefinite periods of time*. Such eminent authorities as Aristobulus, Philo, Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.*, vi, 16), Origen (*De Princip.*, l. 4, 16), Athanasius (*Orat.*, 3 *cont. Arian.*), Gregory of Nyssa, Hilarius (*de Trinit.*, 12, 40) and Saint Augustine follow the first or allegorical exposition. The second or strict sense is received by Ephrem, Chrysostom, Theodoretus, Cosmas, Ambrose, the Cæserean Basil and others.<sup>2</sup> Finally the third opinion obtains among an increasing number of eminent Catholic theologians, and other Christian divines.

<sup>1</sup> Draper, *Conflict between Religion and Science*, p. 187, 8th ed., New York, 1882. Conf. Büchner, *Force and Matter*, p. 120, reprinted from 4th Eng. ed., New York, 1891; and Tyndall, *Apology for the Belfast Address*, p. 548, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Corluy, *Spicilegium Dogmatico-Biblicum*, p. 174 seqq., tom. i, Ghent, 1884.



Besides, anti-theistic evolution does not seem to be aware that, long before Kant and Herschel and La Place heralded the evolutionary hypothesis, it was conceived and begotten in the mind of St. Augustine in his exegesis of the hexahemeron.<sup>1</sup> The Creator in the beginning, quoth he, created the shapeless matter, *materiam informem*, this is Kant's nebulous mass; and on it, he continues, he impressed the potencies and laws by which, in an *evolutional* process, should be produced the physical universe of existences. This opinion, which is an elementary cognition to all biblical expositors, is now in great favor not only with all theologians, Protestant not less than Catholics, but also with the great majority of the weightiest Scientists of modern times. Pianciani, Palmieri, Reusch, Meignan, Vigouroux, Molloy, J. D'Estienne, Delitzsch<sup>2</sup>; Martineau, McCosh and Washburne, among the theologians; Brewster, Faraday, Forbes, Herschel, Andrews, Joule, Clerk-Maxwell, Balfour Stewart, Stokes, William Thomson, Tait, Mivart, Dr. Guyot, Dr. Dana and Sir William Dawson, among the foremost scientific thinkers, may be cited as examples.<sup>3</sup> And as we look at the names of these authorities, does not the vision they had of the amity of Theistic Faith and Science, shatter the assumption that Christianity is unscientific? Will it be said that medieval theology followed the literal version of Genesis? St. Thomas, the prince of medieval schoolmen, states that St. Augustine's opinion has the greatest probability.<sup>4</sup> As to the scholastics who followed the literal sense, why, had they not a right to think as they chose? What is Mr. Spencer's opinion of the theologians? has he not the liberty to think as he wills? Will it be rehearsed that a body of Cardinals condemned Galileo? so much the worse for the Cardinals. But it does not show a very liberal spirit to think that a body of Cardinals could not make a mistake; it does not show much toleration not to allow for an error that grew out of the science of the time. Men can make mistakes, especially so when fearful that the glory of God is in peril. Scientists, forsooth, never made a blunder! The Roman

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, *De Gen. ad lit.*, i, 15, 29, and 4, 21, 38; and *De Civ. Dei*, ii, 6, 7. Conf. Corluy, *op. cit.*, tom. i, pp. 176 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> Corluy, *op. cit.*, tom. i, p. 185.

<sup>3</sup> McCosh, *Bedell Lecture, The Religious Aspect of Evolution*, p. 69, New York and London, 1888. Conf. *Atlas Series of Essays*, no. ii, *Science and Religion, Reply to Mr. Froude*, by Prof. G. Tait, p. 36, New York, 1880.

<sup>4</sup> *2 Sent.*, 12, 2 corp.

Catholic Church, while allowing large liberty to all, never pronounced any of the three exegetical expositions of the hexahemeron, as the revelation of God, as Christianity. The opinions of religionists are not Religion, as the opinions of scientists are not Science.<sup>1</sup> Bible-Christianity has never conflicted, does not conflict with Science. The hexahemeron harmonizes with Evolution scientifically understood,<sup>2</sup> and no scriptural opinion must be represented as endowed with an identity with Scripture, to throw this harmony into disrepute.

But does Mr. Spencer's Evolutionism merit the name "scientific?" The sphere of Science is induction, generalization. She occupies herself with the laws which are made manifest by experiment, observation. The fact of creation, of the origination of things, she does not concern herself about. It is not a fact observed, there was no observer; it is not one of a series of facts occurring according to law, because having occurred but once it is outside any such hypothesis:—

"Creation or destruction of matter, increase or diminution of matter, lies beyond the domain of Science; her domain is confined entirely to the changes of matter."<sup>3</sup>

Now the origination of the Law of Evolution from the Absolute Cause, Mr. Spencer openly avows as an object of Science, as the ultimate truth contained in it. Mr. Spencer's law of Evolution, therefore, as an expression of the Physical Sciences, cannot claim the epithet "scientific" in the strict sense in which it ought to claim it, *i. e.*, in the sense in which it is employed by all physical scientists. But let us allow Mr. Spencer a wider latitude, let us suppose that an inquiry into the nature of the agent behind phenomena be a part of Science, as he asserts it is (§ 30, p. 105), even then his Science forfeits the title of scientific. For even in this loose sense the word scientific must have the attributes of Matthew Arnold's literary definition: "what is admittedly certain and verifiable."<sup>4</sup> Or as Bixby expresses it:—

<sup>1</sup> Rev. A. Washburne, D. D., *Religion and Science, Atlas Series of Essays, op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> McCosh, *Bedell Lectures, op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Le Conte, *Correlation of Vital with Chemical and Physical Forces, in Appendix to The Conservation of Energy*, by Balfour Stewart, p. 171, New York, 1871. Conf. Bixby, *Religion and Science Allies*, p. 19, Chicago, 1889.

<sup>4</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 38.

"In its broader sense, it (Science) signifies *all systematized and trustworthy knowledge*." <sup>1</sup>

But it has been demonstrated that Mr. Spencer's evolution of conscious from physical existence is not only not *certain, verifiable, trustworthy*, but in every sense of the word inconceivable.

And finally, contemplating the Theory of Evolution, in accordance with Mr. Spencer's wishes, as based on the Unknowable Persistent Force, we ask are the laws and potencies existent in the primal nebulous mist from which has been worked out this wonderful Kosmos, are those laws and the potencies operating according to those laws, the work of *wisdom* or *unwisdom*? If the work of wisdom, there is an Intelligence behind them, and the theory of the Unintelligent Unknowable disqualifies itself by the statement; if the work of unwisdom, they are the operation of unintelligent, blind force, the work of *chance*. This latter hypothesis must be Mr. Spencer's, his Unknowable Cause is unintelligent, blind, mechanical force; <sup>2</sup> the Kosmos, therefore, is the play of *chance*, the sport of accident, and *accident* and *chance* are *unscientific*. This makes Mr. Spencer's Evolutionism, which is the product and the growth of modern scientific research, forsooth, no improvement on the Democritean Atomism. Here, if ever, the words of Bacon come in :—

"Democritus and Epicurus, . . . when they asserted the fabric of all things to be raised by a fortuitous concourse of those atoms, without the help of mind, they became universally ridiculous. So far are physical causes from drawing men off from God and Providence, that on the contrary, the philosophers employed in discovering them can find no rest, but by flying to God or Providence at last." <sup>3</sup>

A word in conclusion by way of contrast—if unwisdom be chance and unscientific, wisdom, the antithesis of chance, must needs be scientific, the theistic doctrine of a God behind Evolution must stand out as scientific, and, in the words of Hume, quoted by Prof.

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Note*.—The following words of Max Müller come in with striking fitness here:—" *Sa Majesté le Hasard* has long been dethroned in all scientific studies, and neither Natural Selection, nor Struggle for Life, nor the influence of environment or any other *aliases* of it, will account for the *Logos*, the thought, which with its thousand eyes looks at us through the transparent curtain of nature, and calls for thoughtful recognition from the *Logos* within us" (*Why I am not an Agnostic*, *op. cit.*, p. 893).

<sup>3</sup> *Advancement of Learning*, p. 143, *op. cit.*



Tyndall, it "renders scientific action free."<sup>1</sup> The words of the anti-theistic Büchner point in the same direction :—

"The great Newton pretended to see the finger of God in the tangential or lateral motion of the stars; and Laplace himself could not refrain from exclaiming: 'O philosopher, show me the hand which has thrown the planets on the tangents of their orbits!'"<sup>2</sup>

So *scientific*, so *verifiable*, so *trustworthy* is the idea of Infinite Mind behind the worlds! And if Mr. Spencer be unscientific in asserting the genesis of the mental from the material, in the evolutionary process, must not the theistic evolutionary view, for obverse reasons, be predicated as scientific for wisely refraining from any such statement? The apologetic standpoint of this essay has not need to pronounce on each of the exegetical opinions respecting the Sacred Cosmogony. We have discussed the third of these opinions, viz., the evolutionary view, as it presents the scientific character of Christianity in direct contrast with Mr. Spencer's theory of Evolution. This brings us to the final proposition—is the Unknowable to be the New God?

#### § 31.—*The Unknowable as The New God.*

It will suffice to say but a few words on this point by way of recapitulation. For the whole of the preceding chapter is the firm and fixed laying down of the truth that the quintessence of all true Religion is Knowledge and Practice, Love, Admiration, Fear, Gratitude, Consciousness of our Insufficiency and Dependence. Contrarily, Mr. Spencer's alleged Religion is Nescience, Mystery pure and unmixed, Theory. Mr. Spencer's Religion is without Love; for who can love that which he knows nothing about? Without Admiration; who can admire blind, brute Force? Without Fear, *i.e.*, without the fear of wrong-doing and the fear of the punishment sure to follow it; for the Unknowable punishes not neither does it reward. Without consciousness of our Insufficiency; for the Unknowable cannot perfect us, neither can he debase. Without Dependence, unless it be a dependence akin to that we feel on the law of gravitation or the laws of health. Such a dependence, however, will scarcely be called Religion. The indefinite consciousness of a mystery, an unintelligent Force which we know nothing at all about, which

<sup>1</sup> *The Belfast Address*, *op. cit.*, p. 494.

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 106.

can neither injure nor benefit us, love us nor hate us, which is as much a stranger to us as the spots on the sun, a kind of metaphysical conundrum, but for all Religious intents and purposes practically *Nil*.

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## CHAPTER III.

### CONSPECTUS AND CONCLUSION.

In directing the eye to view the journey we have just finished, the following massive outlines appear to view. Not regarding the large series of unproven statements, the substitution of new, incorrect and undemonstrated definitions of the most vital concepts, and the misstatements affecting the anti-agnostic doctrine, which defects, of themselves, suffice to vitiate at the root Mr. Spencer's theory, it will be enough to look at the following main aspects of The Unknowable.

1. *Mr. Spencer's Metaphysics as applied to Man and the Universe* make them like the Berkeleyan matter endowed with only an illusory existence. Man must reject as unreasonable the belief in the *reality of self*, the belief that he is *a real individual* distinct from other entities, the belief that he is *a real agent*. And yet, while he must, despite the irresistible conviction to the contrary, consider himself as a mere phantasmagorial existent, he must at the same time believe that there exists outside of him a *real bona fide* existence. In a word, the unshakeable conviction that he himself has real existence is to be repudiated, but the unshakeable conviction that another being has it, must be admitted as the central fact in philosophy, and must be admitted because the conviction is unshakeable. The same principle that makes our existence a *shadow*, makes the Unknowable a *reality*!

2. *Mr. Spencer's Metaphysics as applied to God and the Unknowable* make self-existence inconceivable and conclude, *therefore* it *cannot* be predicated of a Personal God. *But*—Mr. Spencer reasons—self-existence *can* be predicated of the Unknowable.—Again the concepts Cause and Absolute are contradictory, *therefore* they *cannot* reside in a Personal God; the concepts Cause and Absolute *though* contradictory *can* reside in the Unknowable.—Once more, *Infinity* cannot be realized in thought, *consequently*, it is *not* an attribute of a Personal God; *Infinity of duration* is equally unrealizable in

thought, still it is an attribute of the Unknowable.—Again a Personal God *cannot* be the absolute Cause, *because* the Absolute *can enter into no relation*, not even into the relation of cause to effect. The Unknowable *can* be the Absolute Cause and *can enter into relation*: The Unknowable as “the Non-relative is related to the Relative.”—The Unknowable is *without* properties or qualities whatever, it is *pure* existence; the Unknowable is *not without* properties, it is existence *plus* the endowments Cause, Absolute. In fine, the Unknowable is *logically* a mere negation, still it is *psychologically* the most positive existence. This contradiction in our faculties is to be ignored, it is necessary for Mr. Spencer, he must have the Unknowable.

3. *This Logical Negative and Psychological Positive is the object of Religion.* Its qualities are: it has mere existence, it is unintelligent Force, it knows nothing about us and we know nothing about it. It is a metaphysical puzzle, and has no interest in the world for us. It is a practical non-entity as far as Religion is concerned, for men will neither worship, nor love, nor fear, nor depend on what they know nothing at all about, and what they have not the least interest in. Religion is surely reduced to a modest existence, when it will fit in the formula that “it is alike our highest wisdom and our highest duty to regard that through which all things exist as the Unknowable.”

4. *The attitude of the Unknowable towards man's Moral End and Right Conduct* is the denial of any such end. The Unknowable is unintelligent mechanical Force, and all things, believes Mr. Spencer, are so many manifestations of it. These manifestations differ, not in kind but in degree; mind is but a higher grade of matter, morality a higher grade of animal conduct. This annihilates all qualitative or specific distinction, between the end man should propose to himself in his actions, and that which the inferior animals manifest in theirs. Prof. Huxley formulates it admirably:—

“In the cycle of phenomena presented by man the animal no more moral end is discernible than in that presented by the wolf and the deer.”<sup>1</sup>

5. *Mr. Spencer's theory of the Unknowable is, however, an inchoate return to the Realistic and Catholic teaching.* Kant and Hume banished *real existence, real causality, real substance, the reality of the Divine Being, the reality of a knowledge of Him.* Mr. Spencer teaches the *real existence* of the Unknowable, affirms *real causality*

<sup>1</sup> *Agnosticism and Christianity, Nineteenth Century*, June, 1889.



of it, and proposes it as an *object* of religious worship. He also conceives it as a nude existence latent under appearances. The Scholastic idea of *substance* is an existent substratum which reveals itself in its qualities. The former concept is an inchoation of the latter, if it has not flowered into it, it is because Mr. Spencer has made, all throughout, a misuse of the principle of causation. And last of all, Mr. Spencer's indefinite consciousness of the Unknowable, his use of the word nescience is in reality the same as our knowledge, the difference is but nominal. The consciousness that a thing exists, or that it has this or that quality, we term *knowledge*; Mr. Spencer is conscious that the Unknowable exists, that it is a First Cause, etc. This is knowledge not nescience. A difference of name is a useless logomachy. This difference would not exist, if Mr. Spencer, while substantially separate from Kant, did not think he was really at one with him. The former put the existence and every attribute of God beyond all consciousness; with him He was truly a noumenon, unknowable. Mr. Spencer puts the divine existence and some of his attributes, within the domain of indefinite consciousness; he must, nevertheless, have the Deity, with the German philosopher, unknowable. This *so-called* unknowableness maugre all this, must bear the opprobrium of a *true* unknowableness, its author will not allow that it is, will not dignify it with the right and title of knowledge.

There is one thing about Mr. Spencer's religious theory that must be noted, *it is nothing if not metaphysics*. This is a true approach to the Catholic and Aristotelian method, and casts reproach on and augurs the decay of the spirit of those philosophic scientists, whose shibboleth is, *toute métaphysique m'épouvante*.

6. *The theory of the Unknowable is retrograde Science and retrograde Religion, just as it is retrograde Morality.*—Retrograde Science, it is without an intelligible base, built on chance. Retrograde Religion, its religious object is an unintelligent, unlovable, uninfluencing Being, in substitution for Infinite Intelligence, Infinite Love, Infinite Influence. Mind in Religion, Mind in Morality, Mind in Science; not mere unintelligent Force in Religion, mere unintelligent Force in Morality, mere unintelligent Force in Science, is the only hope of the progressive spirit of this and of every age to come. "*In Thy light we shall see light:*" "*You adore that which you know not: we adore that which we know.*"

*Vidit Sacra Facultas,*

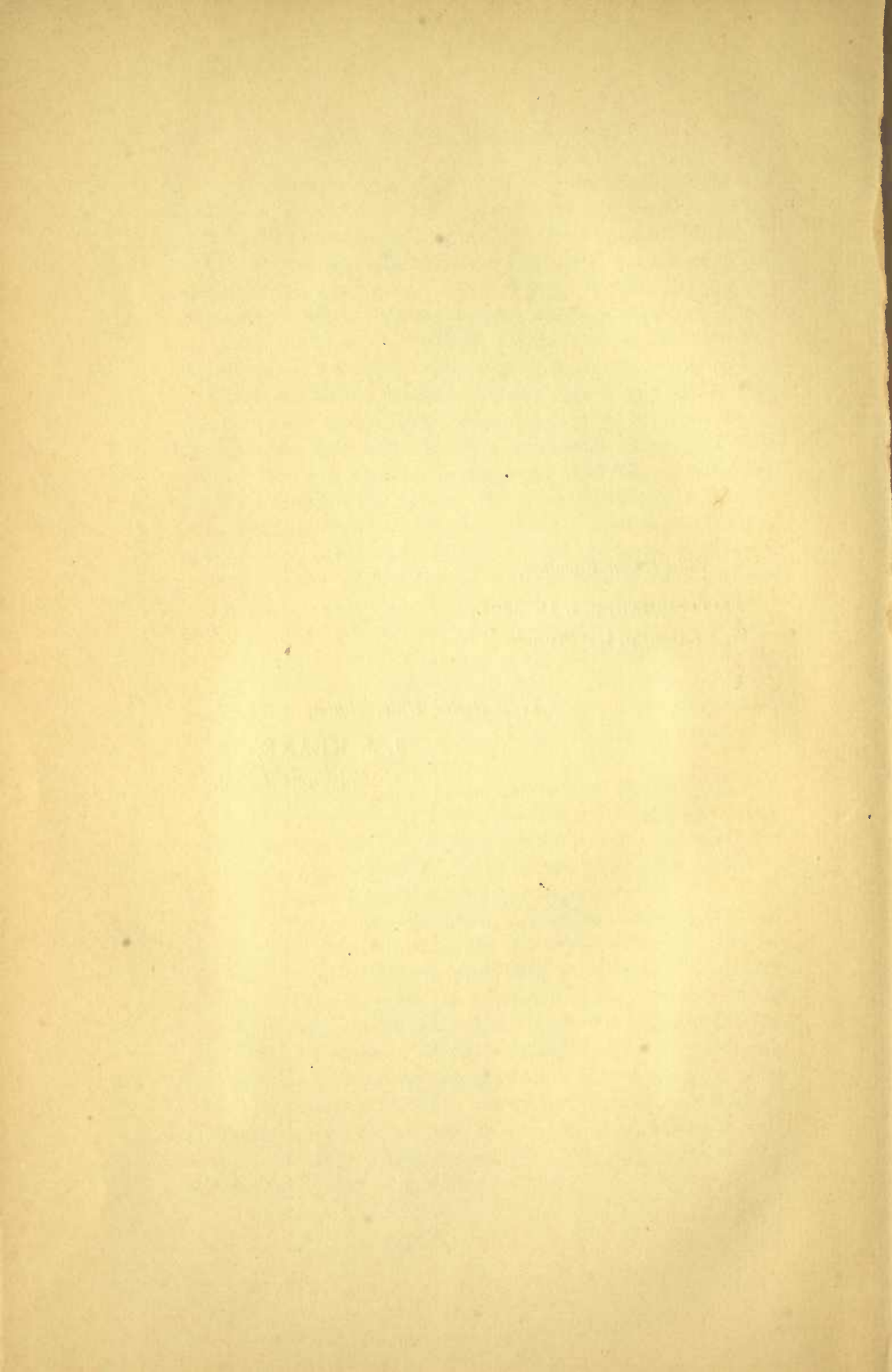
T. O'GORMAN, p. t. Decanus.

G. PÉRIES, p. t. a Secretis.

*Vidit Rector Universitatis,*

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